
OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
Nuka Cola
ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO-GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE
ULTIMATE GUIDE: 1943
INSIDE CAPCOM'S SUPERCHARGED WORLD WAR II SHOOT-'EM-UP SEQUEL
CELEBRATING 100 GAMES
TEAM17
HOW THE PUBLISHER IS EMBRACING ITS AMIGA ROOTS
THE HISTORY OF
Fallout
KEY VAULT DWELLERS REVEAL THE STORY BEHIND THE SERIES THAT SET THE WORLD ON FIRE
THE STORY OF STORMLORD
RAFFAELE CECCO CHATS ABOUT HIS CONTROVERSIAL ADVENTURE GAME
PLAYSTATION POWER
HOW SONY SHOWCASED ITS DEBUT CONSOLE WITH DEMO 1
CREATING 16-BIT MASTERPIECES
MEET THE ARTISTS THAT USED PIXEL POWER TO DELIVER STUNNING LOADING SCREENS
MASTERING NEO DRIFT OUT
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VISCO'S HIGH-THROTTLE ARCADE RACER
PLUS!
-KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE
-DAVID MULLICH
-SIN AND PUNISHMENT
-SKYDIVER
-FROGGER
-WONDER BOY IN MONSTERLAND
Pip-Boy
FUTURE
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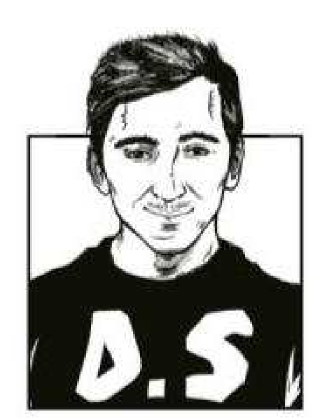
THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE 16-BIT LOADING SCREEN?



DARRAN JONES

The *Turrican* loading screen always sticks in my mind, probably because I have a thing for big explosions.
Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Dead Cells
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



DREW SLEEP

Uridium on the Amiga nails that sci-fi mech-ish aesthetic, and that's my jam.
Expertise:
Setting the world on fire
Currently playing:
Dragon Quest XI
Favourite game of all time:
Final Fantasy VIII



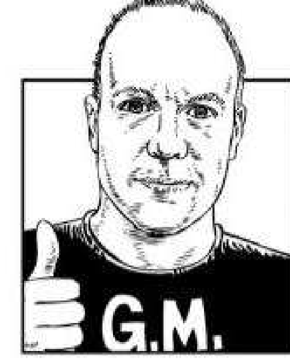
NICK THORPE

Perhaps it's just because I've been playing Team17 games this month, but the open-mouthed *Alien Breed* monster is the first thing that comes to mind.
Expertise:
Owning five Master Systems (I sold two)
Currently playing:
SNK Heroines: Tag Team Frenzy
Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



SAM RIBBITS

May just be because I'm a big fan of the series, but I'll go for the *Worms* loading screen on the Amiga.
Expertise:
Pixels
Currently playing:
Pool Panic
Favourite game of all time:
Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos



GRAEME MASON

A game I've discovered recently is the wonderful *Datastorm* on the Amiga, which has a very lovely and evocative loading screen.
Expertise:
Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
Currently playing:
Prey Mooncrash
Favourite game of all time:
Resident Evil 4



MARTYN CARROLL

More of a scene than a screen, but the opening to *The Secret of Monkey Island*, where Melee Island appears and the theme tune builds, is just brilliant.
Expertise:
Sinclair stuff
Currently playing:
Unravel Two
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



JASON KELK

I'm not sure I can pick a single screen, but all of the level loading pictures in *Agony* on the Amiga are beautiful.
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Scout
Favourite game of all time:
Io



PAUL DRURY

By the 16-bit days, I was a console gamer so loading screens were an 8-bit memory but I do love the *Pilotwings* title screen if that counts.
Expertise:
Sprite flickering
Currently playing:
Downward Spiral
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep in Space



ANDREW FISHER

The iconic poppy from *Cannon Fodder*, drawn by Stoo Cambridge.
Expertise:
Over thirty-five years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Wii U
Currently playing:
Space Moguls
Favourite game of all time:
Paradroid

LOADING...



If you're a PC gamer, our front cover is going to be very familiar to you this month. While it's now largely seen by many as a multiformat series thanks to Bethesda's impressive revitalisation of the franchise from *Fallout 3* onwards, it's easy to forget that its origins lie on the home systems of the late Nineties. A natural evolution of Brian Fargo's *Wasteland*, *Fallout* offered a gritty take on the RPGs of the time, which were typically obsessed with going on dragon-slaying quests.

With that in mind we've spoken to various luminaries who have been involved with the earlier games, including Brian Fargo, Tim Cain and Chris Avellone to explain the difficulties Interplay faced while creating its apocalyptic RPG and how the series evolved under the watchful eye of Bethesda.

That's not all, though. We also celebrate Team17's 100th game with a detailed look at its near three-decade-old history, chat to Raffaelle Cecco about his fantasy puzzler, *Stormlord* and speak to the talented artists who breathed life into the 16-bit loading screens of the Eighties and Nineties. Oh and for everyone that's been asking about Collector's Corner, you'll be delighted to hear it makes its return on page 110. If you want to feature your own collection in the magazine it's the perfect time to do so.

Enjoy the magazine!

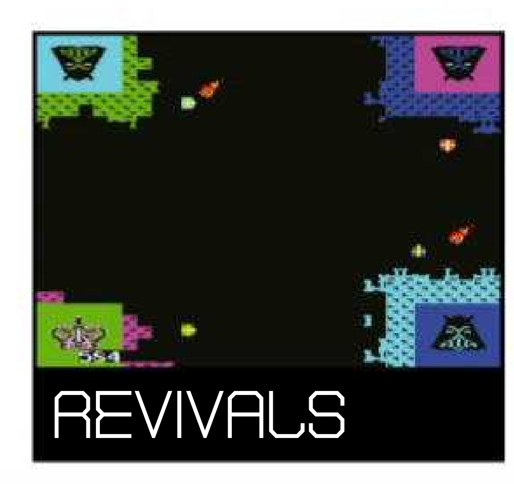


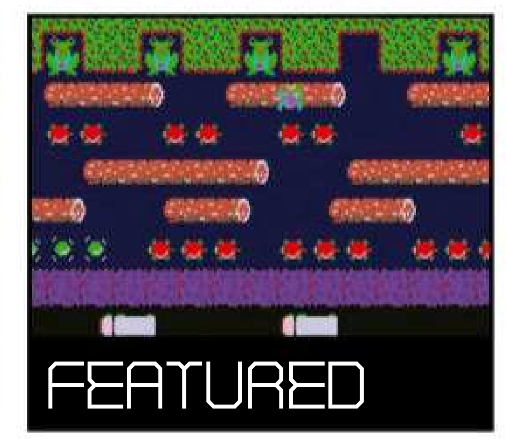


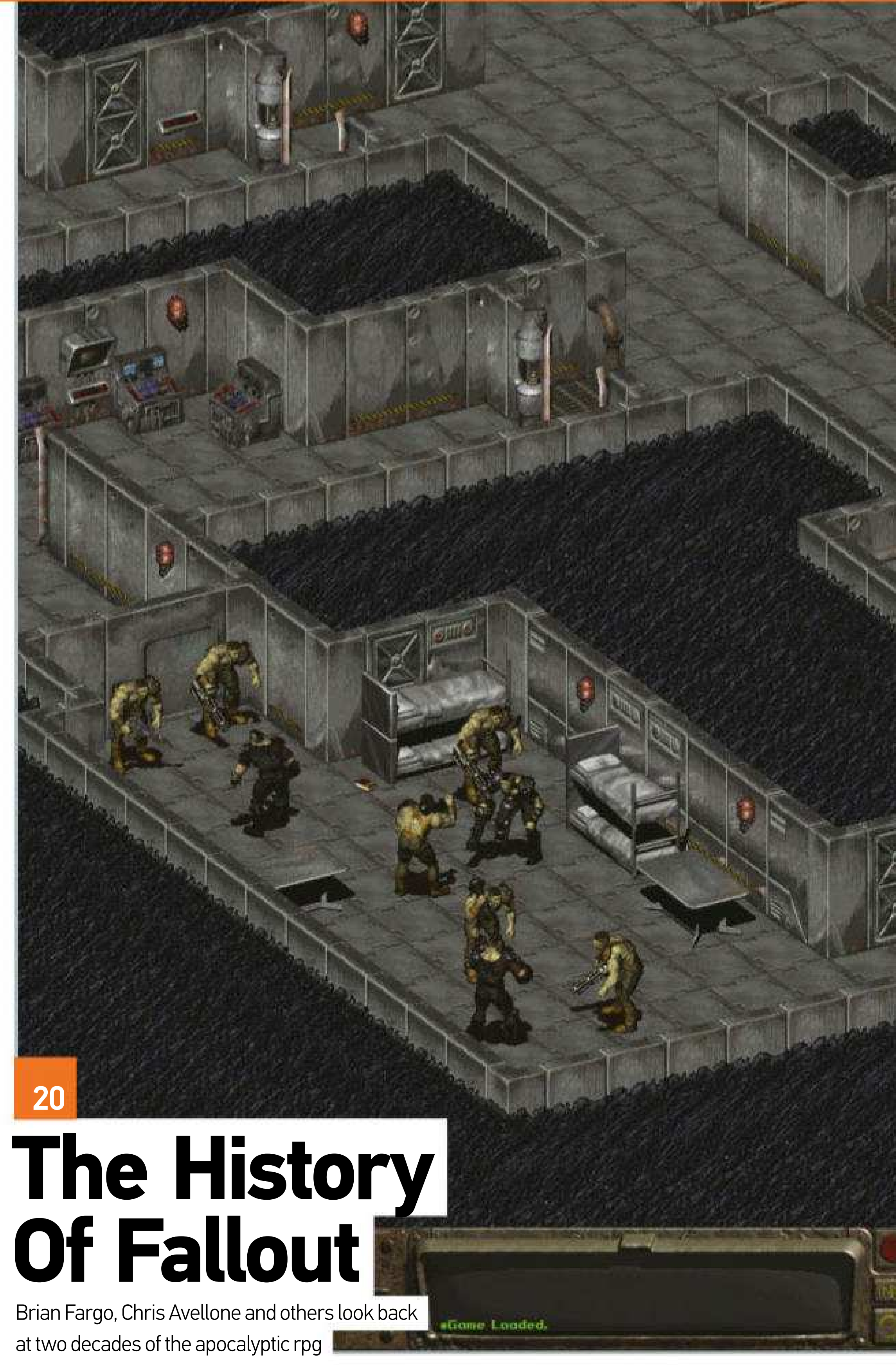
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>> Load 186 Breathing new life into classic games



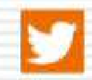
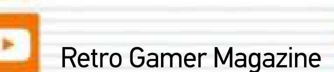


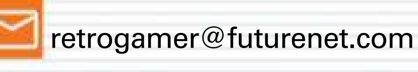


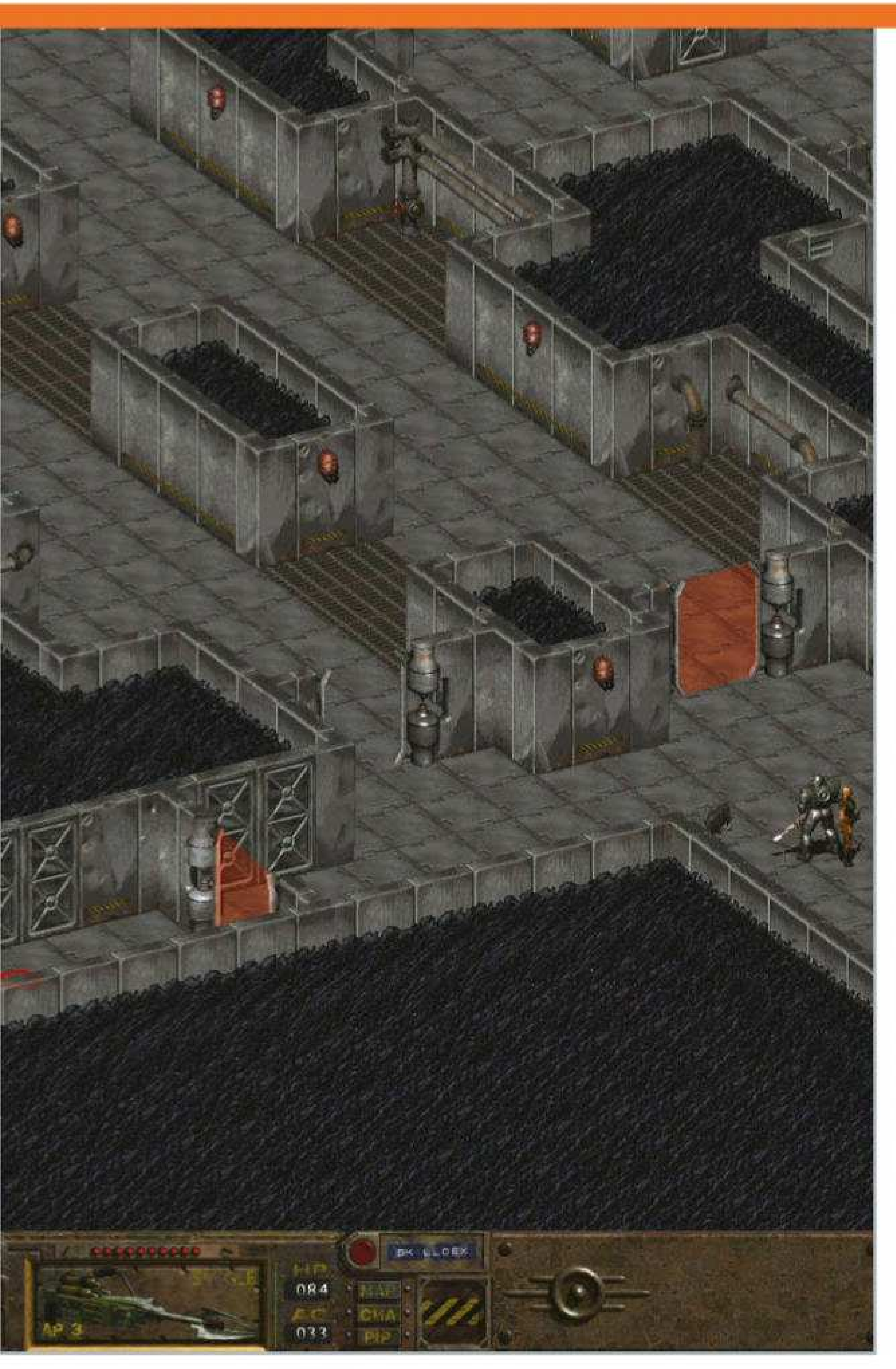




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PINBALL WIZARDS

Mel Kirk and Imre Szigeti on acquiring Williams' classic pinball tables



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Earlier this year pinball fans were disheartened to learn that Farsight Studios' licence for Williams Bally tables had run out and that over 90 tables would be removed from *Pinball Arcade*. Now, Zen Studios, the owner of *Pinball FX3*, has revealed it has secured the rights and has its own plans for the classic tables. We spoke to Mel Kirk, VP of publishing and lead designer, Imre 'Emeric' Szigeti to learn more.

Zen Studios is known for creating its own pinball tables. Why secure the rights to existing ones?

MK: Zen Studios has been on an epic pinball journey for more than a decade, and now being able to work on the Williams Bally collection presents a fantastic opportunity for us to do something new and exciting. Not only are we producing the highest quality classic simulations possible, we're also remastering these tables and applying the Zen touch to make them feel new and fresh for an audience that has never experienced these games before.

How will your versions differ to the ones that were available on *Pinball Arcade*?

IS: The most tangible thing that sets Zen's versions apart is that all tables – including their physics, difficulty and visuals – will be available both as simulations in their original form and as remastered videogame experiences



» [PC] Licensed tables have been a big part of *Pinball FX*'s success, so the Williams acquisition makes perfect sense.





» Mel Kirk (top) is Zen Studios' VP of publishing and loves pinball in all its forms.

» Imre 'Emeric' Szigeti is the lead developer on *Pinball FX3* and has exciting plans for the new Williams tables.



» [PC] Here's a close-up of the remastered Fish Tales table. Expect the fisherman to get more animated as play progresses.

» Each table is carefully taken apart so all the relevant measurements are made to ensure everything is as accurate as possible.

enhanced with new graphics, animated toys, and a host of new features.

These tables will feature the state-of-the-art digital 'Zen' physics and difficulty our players already know so well, and have loved on our previous tables. They'll also support all the new *Pinball FX3* game modes, features and custom tournaments. Of course, in classic mode the ball will handle as close to the real thing as we've ever managed to get, so those who prefer real-life pinball will hopefully find what they are looking for.

We are very fortunate to have direct access to the real-life tables we were working on. We're able to disassemble them – gently, of course! – and measure all their parts and accessories one by one with great accuracy. We can 3D scan their toys, textures and dimensions, too. The result is unmatched precision – the tables are as close to their real-world counterparts as possible.

Will they use the same engine as your existing games or will a new one be built?

IS: Throughout development, we strived to accomplish the perfect synergy between our existing technologies and the brand-new elements necessary to make the digital version of such illustrious real-world tables a reality.

Our major goal was to faithfully reproduce the original tables as closely as possible, so adding an emulation



» [PC] One cool feature of the remastered Medieval Madness is this rather nice fire-breathing dragon.

layer – ensuring that the very same ROMs control the tables as in their real-life counterparts – was one part of the equation. Our newly developed, highly precise physics system for the arcade-perfect simulation approximates the real thing closer than we ever have. The result is a fusion of the old and the new, working in perfect harmony to deliver a truly exceptional pinball experience!

A big concern with digital tables is that when they're gone they're gone forever. How long have you secured the licence for?

MK: Once you buy a digital product you own it forever, even if it is removed from a store for purchase by new players. It is true licensed digital content presents some challenges and uncertainly that will weigh on the mind of players. While I cannot disclose the details of our agreement with Scientific Games, I can assure you there is a long runway for

> **"Our major goal was to faithfully reproduce the original tables as closely as possible"**
> Imre 'Emeric' Szigeti

availability, and players can feel confident that their purchases are secure. If you look at Zen's history with licensed products, I think it speaks for itself – we've been working with Marvel for eight years now, for example, and *Star Wars* for five. The vast majority of our licensed content remains on the store even close to a decade after release.

Does this mean we can expect Zen Studios to secure the rights to other classic tables?

MK: We are focused on the Williams Bally collection at this time and plan to get these tables out. We are also working on new original tables, and we have existing licensing agreements that provide us opportunities for original content.

Why do you think pinball games in general continue to be so popular with fans?

MK: *Pinball* has a very rich history, and the game is constantly evolving. As technology changes and becomes more advanced, the game of pinball



» [PC] Imre is proud of the new real-time lighting and shadows found in the latest build of *Pinball FX*.

itself still feels accessible and is easily understood. Companies like Stern, Jersey Jack, Zen Studios and Farsight Studios are all really active in game production, which means more pinball is available and this grows the player base. Global organizations like the IFPA are bursting with new members and active players. Pinball as an esport is actively in progress, more and more barcades are opening, new games are always being introduced – this convergence of factors is helping the game explode, and there are more people playing pinball now than in any time in the games history. It's really, really exciting! We are really proud to be a part of it. *



JEFF MINTER LIVES IN VR

If the excellent release of *Tempest 4000* has left you hungry for more Minter, you'll be delighted to hear that he's got more VR delights planned for PC and PS4 owners. In addition to porting *Polybius* to PC, he's also beginning to convert his fun iOS games that became *The Minotaur Project* to PC and PS4 and they will be VR compatible. The first two games in volume one are *Grid Runner* and *Goatup* and Jeff is hoping to charge around £5 for the pair of games, which sounds like excellent value to us. Both games feature numerous game modes and *Gridrunner* also has a brand new arcade mode. Look out for a review later in the year.



ONIMUSHA RETURNS

Capcom recently revealed that its action horror game, *Onimusha: Warlords* will be heading to all current systems in January 2019. It's not an overhaul like *Resident Evil 2*, and will instead be a HD update like the recent *Devil May Cry* games. While we're a little disappointed that the superior Xbox update, *Genma Onimusha* isn't being used as the source of the update, it's still great to see the game return for modern systems. Could this mean a new game is on the way? It's unlikely, but you never know.



» [PC] *Windjammer* tournaments are a regular thing at **Retro Gamer** HQ, so we're all looking forward to the sequel.

RETRO CLASSICS REBORN

DOT EMU ANNOUNCE STREETS OF RAGE AND WINDJAMMERS SEQUELS

Few things get Nick excited more than new *Sonic The Hedgehog* announcements, but that all changed recently thanks to two surprising reveals from DotEmu.

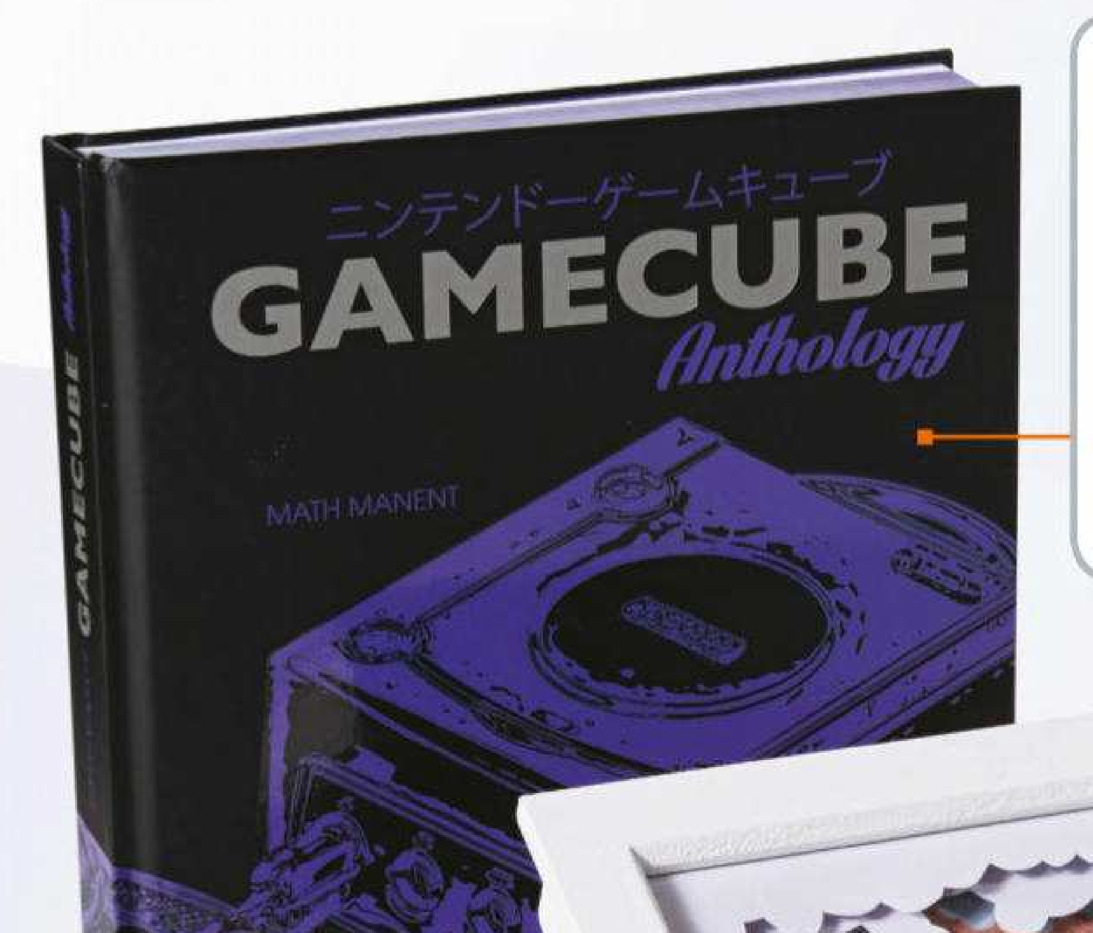
The company used Gamescom to reveal that a sequel to the popular Neo-Geo game, *Windjammers* would be heading to PC and is an exclusive on Nintendo's Switch, which already hosts over 90 Neo-Geo games. While it no longer has the distinctive pixel art of the original game, it retains the same late Eighties early Nineties aesthetic style and utilises the exact same layout for matches. The game itself will be out sometime in 2019, but in the meantime you can use your Switch to play the original game, which will be released this month.

Even bigger news was the surprise announcement of S*treets Of Rage 4*, which is also being published by DotEmu and was unveiled at PAX West. The game itself is a collaboration between LizardCube, which recently worked on *Wonder Boy: The Dragon's Trap*, and Guard Crush Games, which is best known for its scrolling fighter, *Streets Of Fury EX*. So far only Axel Stone and Blaze Fielding have been announced, but we wouldn't be surprised if more heroes are on the way. There's also no news about the involvement of composer Yuzo Koshiro's involvement, but again, it's only a matter of time before it's revealed. We'll have an interview about both games next issue. ✱



» [PS4] As with past Lizardcube games, *Streets Of Rage 4* looks lovely in motion.





GameCube Anthology

If you lost hours to *Metroid Prime* and *Super Mario Sunshine*, you'll be interested in the latest entry in Math Manent's series of single-format books, as this one concentrates on Nintendo's purple fun box. The book covers the format in its entirety, featuring hardware, software (including cancelled games), and a history of the system that pays equal attention to its successes and stumbles.

Price: £39.30
From: funstockretro.co.uk

Tomb Raider Original Collectable Pin Badge

Pin badges are pretty underrated in the world of gaming apparel, we feel. Do you want to rep your favourite game or character but not shout it out with a loud T-shirt? Well, a pin badge is for you. This badge, however, isn't exactly subtle. It's *huge*! Better suited for something like a backpack than a hat or denim jacket, this Lara Croft pin badge is ideal for those of you who are big followers of the legendary tomb raider.

Price: £19.99
From: numskull.co.uk



The Ultimate 70s Collection

Whisk yourself back to a simpler time with our latest bookazine – a time when the Raleigh Chopper was the coolest thing on two wheels, when Weebles wobbled (but never fell down), and when Simon was the most addictive electronic toy on the shelves. The book is packed with features on the fashion, toys, movies, music and TV shows that made the decade great.

Price: £9.99
From: All good newsagents and myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

PICK OF THE MONTH

3D Diorama Shadow Boxes

These are some of the coolest retro gaming art pieces we've seen in a while – 3D dioramas framed in shadow boxes. The map of Hyrule as seen in *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* has real depth, bordered by clouds and given a matching white frame, while *Strider* has never looked better – in fact, it has whet our appetite for a 3D version of the game like those M2 made for Sega on 3DS.

These two are excellent examples of what is on offer, but they aren't the only things. As well as a Dark World version of the Hyrule map, you can find popular games and cult classics including *Advance Wars, Chrono Trigger, Devil Crash, Dragon Quest, King Of Fighters '98, Ms Pac-Man, Octopath Traveller, Street Fighter II* and *Track & Field*. These range from screenshot recreations to box art scenes, and all come framed.

Price: From £29.99 **From:** 8bitboutique.co.uk

Drs13 mug

Simon Butler's pixel art featured in many 8-bit computer games during his time at Imagine Software and Ocean, and now you can have it on a mug. This art celebrates the TV series Doctor Who, featuring the iconic TARDIS police box time machine that the Doctor travels in, as well as all 13 forms from William Hartnell to Jodie Whittaker.

Price: £9.99
From: dinosaur-pie.co.uk

Here's my bio... Paul Rose
Paul Rose is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator and chief writer of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes for kids TV, but can still be found rambling on about games, old and new, for his daily website, Digitiser2000.com.

Coming of age

I think I have a slightly skewed perspective on the history of gaming, having been a games journalist for a big chunk of it. I wasn't always one, of course. Prior to 1993, I was just some pleb who played games, and that – barring the odd column or blog here and there – is what I've been since 2003.

I've long believed that I got lucky, and those ten years were the most exciting time in the history of videogames – taking us from the Sega versus Nintendo war, to the launches of the PlayStation, PS2 and Xbox. It was the era in which games grew up, when the first generation of gamers came of age. In those ten years we had the golden era of gaming TV in the UK – *GamesMaster*, *Bad Influence*, *Bits* – and saw gaming become a global, mass-market, blockbuster, industry. We saw the rise of 3D graphics, the launches of *Doom*, *WipEout*, *Daytona USA*… Games went online for the first time.

The generation that has grown up during the Noughties and beyond has always had games which look and play great. My generation was, in a lot of ways, pioneering. We were getting so many things for the very first time. We were the guinea pigs, albeit guinea pigs who were the subjects of a rather splendid experiment, in which we were hand-fed grapes and given hourly massages.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not disparaging the current state of gaming, I just wonder whether the now is as interesting as that remarkable decade. Games are just sort of there these days. They're just another mass entertainment medium along with movies, TV, and music. Whether it's on the PlayStation 4 or an iPhone, pretty much everyone plays games. I mean, games are great, but do we live in a time when everything surrounding games are as exciting as they once were? Aren't we all a bit more savvy, cynical, and clued-up?

And then I stop and question myself. Do I just feel that way because I'm middle-aged now, and less wide-eyed and innocent? Do I feel this way about the years between 1993 and 2003 because I was seeing it from the inside?

I mean, being a games journalist is mostly great. You play and write about games for a living. You get to meet the people who play those games. You go to trade shows to see and play games before anyone else, and – certainly back in the Nineties – attend fancy parties and go on freebie trips around the world.

And, lest we forget, I was the final generation of games journalists to exist pre-YouTube and internet. For the most part, we were treated pretty well by our readers. I wonder if I'd have such a rose-tinted view of my time as a games journo if I was forever being attacked online, having my ethics called into question. What I'm saying is… are my feelings subjective rather than objective?

I'd love to know what you think. In short: were the years 1993 to 2003 – the Digitiser years – the best, most exciting, time to be a gamer? Opinions on an old-school snailmail postcard, please.

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com 



Passion project

We speak to Jess Morrissette the owner of The Video Game Soda Machine Project

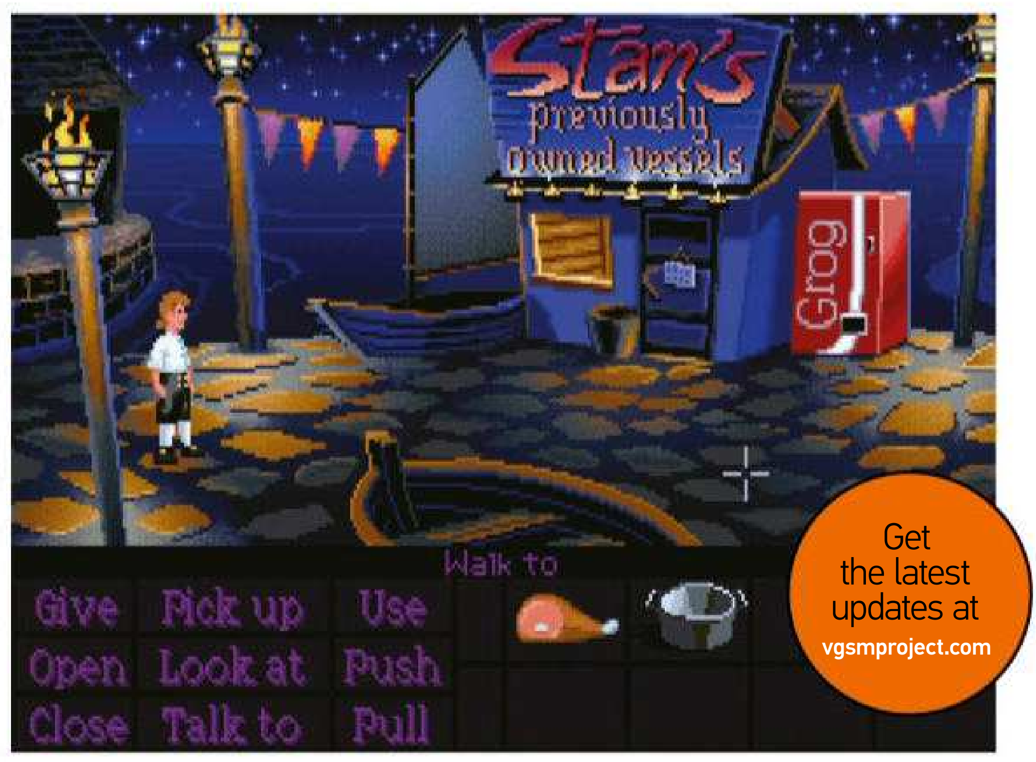
By day, Jess Morrissette is a professor of political science at Marshall University. Outside of that he's the curator of the wonderful The Video Game Soda Machine Project, which is attempting to chart every possible drinks dispensing machine you've ever seen in a videogame. Jess has catalogued over 2,330 machines already, but he's far from finished.

What made you catalogue soda machines in videogames?
Like all the best ideas, it started out as a joke. I posted a screenshot of a soda machine from *Batman: Arkham Knight* on Twitter and suggested someone should start archiving all the virtual soda machines that show up in videogames. I followed up with a few screenshots from other games, my followers began tweeting their favourites, and before long, the Video Game Soda Machine Project was up and running.

Why do you think soda machines crop up so often in games?
There are practical reasons – as an easy way to dispense health to players, or to light up a shadowy corridor in a survival horror game. That said, I have argued that their most important role is giving games a sense of presence. In other words, seeing familiar, reliable objects like vending machines in virtual environments helps players feel like they're really 'there' while playing a game. Soda machines in particular are a direct reflection of the consumerism that, in many ways, defines modern society.

What's the earliest game you've found a soda machine in and the most recent?
The earliest is a handheld Bandai game from 1983 called *Catch-A-Coke*. It's a promotional LCD game featuring a Coca-Cola vending machine trying to catch soda cans as they fall from the sky. Versions of the game were actually installed in real-life Coke machines as well, giving customers a brief distraction while waiting for their drinks to dispense. The most recent is *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*, which just entered into beta recently.

What's your favourite fake videogame soda?
Grog from the *Monkey Island* series will always hold a special place in my heart, not only because *The Secret of Monkey Island* is one of my favourite games, but also because it's one of the first soda machines I recall seeing in a videogame. Handsomeman Executive Cola from *Killer7* is also pretty amazing, just for the name alone.



Get the latest updates at vgsmproject.com

» [PC] "*Monkey Island* is one of my favourite games and the first soda machine I remember seeing in the videogame."

> "[I have a] reputation among my colleagues as the weirdo who collects virtual soda machines"
> Jess Morrissette

How have you incorporated this into your normal work?
I've integrated this project into my research work by exploring not only the purposes of videogame soda machines, but also their broader sociocultural meaning as signifiers of consumerism. In April, I presented an early version of my research at the annual convention of the Popular Culture Association of America. I've also incorporated it into my career by developing the reputation among my colleagues as the weirdo who collects virtual soda machines.

How do you go about doing your research into videogame soda?
Sometimes, I just randomly stumble across a soda machine while playing a game for fun. Other times, I'll search through walkthroughs or watch a gameplay video, confirm there's a soda machine lurking somewhere in a game, and then go after it. Whenever possible, I like to grab my own screenshots, but I'm limited in terms of what platforms and games I actually have access to. In those cases, I usually go to Twitter or Reddit to crowdsource a screenshot.

How much time do you think you've spent playing games to create your screenshots?
If I had to ballpark it, I'd estimate 150 hours. That's been the best part of the project for me: having an excuse to play a ton of games I never would have played otherwise.



» [PC] "Sierra Petrovita, curator of the Nuka-Cola Museum in *Fallout 3*, is basically the patron saint of the Video Game Soda Machine Project."

» [PC] "Not only is *Half-Life* an amazing game, but I appreciate how the NPCs at Black Mesa interacted with soda machines and other objects."

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

OCTOBER 2001 – With legacy formats winding down and the rest of the next-gen machines yet to hit UK shores, there's plenty to choose from… as long as you have a PS2 – join Nick Thorpe to find out what was on offer

NT

NEWS OCTOBER 2001

On 4 October, Siberia Airlines flight 1812 was shot down over the Black Sea, killing all 78 people on board. Although initially suspected by Russian officials to have been brought down by an act of terrorism, the flight from Tel-Aviv, Israel to Novosibirsk, Russia was found to have been shot down by a Ukrainian missile that had overshot its target during joint Russian-Ukrainian military exercises.

On 7 October, the USA invaded Afghanistan, backed by allies including the UK. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the USA had requested the extradition of Osama bin Laden and the expulsion of al-Qaeda. Afghanistan's Taliban regime refused these demands, and was swiftly driven from power, with a new interim government established in December 2001.

On 23 October, Apple released the iPod, a $399 music player which played digital files from a 5GB hard disk. Despite only working with Mac computers, Apple sold 125,000 by the end of the year. Microsoft released the Windows XP OS on 25 October, replacing the disastrous Windows Me after less than a year and a half. Thanks to a long shelf life and a reputation for stability, XP captured a peak market share of over 80% of all desktop computers, and remained the world's most-used operating system until Windows 7 surpassed it in 2012.

[GBA] For all the next-gen tech hype, it was old fashioned game design that earned all the praise this month.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 2001

Retro gamers will have taken interest in the front cover of *Play* this month, as it promised a review of none other than *Spy Hunter*. Midway's new game took the ideas of 1983's coin-up and updated them in glorious PS2-powered 2001-o-vision. In your very fast transforming car/boat, your goal was once again to chase down bad guys – this time across 14 structured missions. *Play*'s Mark Crawley felt that it was "exciting, different and new whilst remaining gloriously true to its roots", and gave it a 94% score. *Official PS2 Magazine*'s Paul Fitzpatrick gave the game 8/10 and *CVG* went lower at 7/10, cautioning players "don't expect the thrill to last forever".

Another old name in vehicular destruction made a return on PS2 this month, as *Twisted Metal Black* marked the series' first PAL release in five years. The car combat action hadn't changed a great deal since *Twisted Metal World Tour*, but both the graphics and plot had taken a darker turn, as the title suggests. *CVG* felt the graphics to be "adequate rather than gobsmacking", but that the game was "a destructive riot of fun," awarding it 7/10. In *Official PS2 Magazine*, Paul Rose awarded the game 8/10, noting that, "You can't cuss any game that begins with The Rolling Stones' *Paint It Black*."

As for the rest of the new arrivals for Sony's console this month, most could be described as solid but unspectacular. Helicopter blaster *Thunderhawk: Operation Phoenix* and football sim *This Is Football 2002* both earned 7/10 scores from *Official PS2 Magazine* and *CVG*. Motocross racer *MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael* got 73% from *Play*, 7/10 from *Official PS2 Magazine* and 6/10 from *CVG*, and its extreme sports cousin *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2* picked up 6/10 scores from both *Edge* and *Official PS2 Magazine*. *Sir Alex Ferguson's Player Manager 2001* picked up 88% from *Play*, but only 7/10 from *Official PS2 Magazine* and 6/10 from *CVG*. Treasure's oddball pinching game *Freak Out* also arrived on UK shores, accompanied by a spectacularly awful print advert, gaining 83% from *Play* and 7/10 from *Official PS2 Magazine*.

Even the month's major Dreamcast release was of interest to PS2 owners, as they'd soon be receiving their own version of *Headhunter*. In this action



[Dreamcast] Third-person cinematic action shooter *Headhunter* was well received on the Sega system.

[PS2] Play went crazy for the return of *Spy Hunter*, but other magazines weren't quite so thrilled.



[PC] John Woo inspired the gunplay of *Max Payne*, and *Edge* remarked that your choreography needed equal precision.

[PC] The team-based design of *Project Eden* was innovative, but didn't have the impact Core'd hoped for.



[PS2] *Play*'s reviewer seemed rather too deeply concerned by the 'allure' of *Dog Of Bay*'s performers.

adventure game you take the role of Jack Wade, a bounty hunter tasked with tracking down the murderer of Anti-Crime Network chief Christopher Stern. *CVG* gave the game 8/10, noting that the game's stealth sections showed that developers Amuze were "big fans of *Metal Gear Solid*." *Dreamcast Magazine*'s Simon Cann awarded the game 92%, commenting that the developer had "obviously lavished a great deal of attention on both the title's plot and its mission structures". However, Sega fans also had bad news this month, too – AM2's *Propeller Arena*, delayed in the wake of the World Trade Center attack in September 2001 month, was permanently cancelled this month.

Likewise, one of the PC's highest profile releases was also on PS2. *Project Eden* was a sci-fi action adventure from the original *Tomb Raider* team at Core Design, and focused on a team of law enforcement officers with unique abilities working through a huge city investigating odd goings-on. *CVG* awarded the game 8/10 (but cautioned PS2 players to lower the score by a point), and *PC Zone* gave it 85%, describing it as a "solid and entertaining" game which had "too many limitations and elusive flaws that prevent it from becoming a classic." *Official PS2 Magazine*'s Ryan Butt felt that it "only ever hints at true greatness," and also gave it 8/10.

Also on the PC, the highly anticipated third-person shooter *Max Payne* made its debut. The game's neo-noir story saw the titular renegade cop attempting to avenge the murder of his family, and its gunfights were spiced up with the bullet time slowdown effect popularised by *The Matrix*. *Edge*'s 6/10 review was some way off the critical consensus, though its criticisms that the game was very linear and relied too heavily on the quicksave function were perfectly valid ones. *PC Zone* awarded *Max Payne* 90%, with Richie Shoemaker lauding the game as "innovative and polished" and "a triumph of style above substance", which would entertain you until the next major release – speculated to be "probably 3D Realms' own *Duke Nukem Forever*".

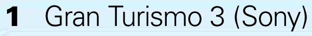
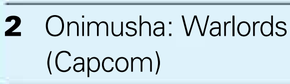
One game stood head and shoulders above the competition this month, though, and it definitely wasn't coming to Sony's all-conquering console, as *Mario Kart Super Circuit* arrived on the Game Boy Advance. With flat tracks resembling those of the SNES original but with more detailed graphics, and some new features borrowed from the Nintendo 64 sequel, the game drew unanimous praise from all who saw it. *N64*'s Planet Game Boy section devoted six pages to the game, giving it the full 5/5 score and describing it as "the perfect marriage between 16-bit and 64-bit versions". *Edge*, similarly pleased with it, gave the game a 9/10 review and *CVG* did the same, claiming that, "It manages to live up to the planet-sized hype."

Next month, Bill Gates' big black box descends upon the console market. Are you ready for it? *



OCTOBER 2001

PLAYSTATION
1 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (Activision)
2 Tomb Raider II (Eidos)
3 Tomb Raider (Eidos)
4 Driver (Infogrames)
5 Brian Lara Cricket (Codemasters)

PLAYSTATION 2



1 Gran Turismo 3 (Sony)
2 Onimusha: Warlords (Capcom)
3 Red Faction (Eidos)
4 Moderngroove Ministry Of Sound Edition (Ubisoft)
5 NBA Street (EA)

PC
1 Max Payne (Take 2)
2 Operation Flashpoint (Codemasters)
3 Microsoft Train Simulator (Microsoft)
4 Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal (Interplay)
5 The Sims: House Party (EA)

MUSIC
1 Because I Got High (Afroman)
2 Can't Get You Out Of My Head (Kylie Minogue)
3 Hey Baby (DJ Otzi)
4 I'm A Slave 4 U (Britney Spears)
5 One Night Stand (Mis-Teeq)

THIS MONTH IN…



Computer & Video Games

The news pages this month bring word of a tiny new console, the Pokémon Mini. Measuring 58mmx74mm, the handheld offers a variety of games on miniature cartridges, including *Pokémon Puzzle Collection*, *Pokémon Party Mini* and *Pokémon Pinball Mini*. Could this be 2002's hot format? (It wasn't.)



N64

A facelift is promised for *N64* next month, to refocus on GameCube content. It's a good job, too – for the first time ever, the magazine has no new UK or import N64 reviews. To prepare readers, this month's cover story is a six-page preview of Toby Gard's *Galleon*, which eventually launched as an Xbox exclusive in 2004.



Play

Import PS2 music game *Dog Of Bay*, featuring anthropomorphised dancing dogs, scores a mighty 90% in this issue. However, the game's reviewer worried "that the game has somehow managed to awaken or invoke and unquestionably deviant sexual preference in all who witnessed it", to the delight of local furry conventions.

Warlords

ATARI'S GAME STILL HAS THE MAGIC



» ATARI INC » ARCADE » 1980

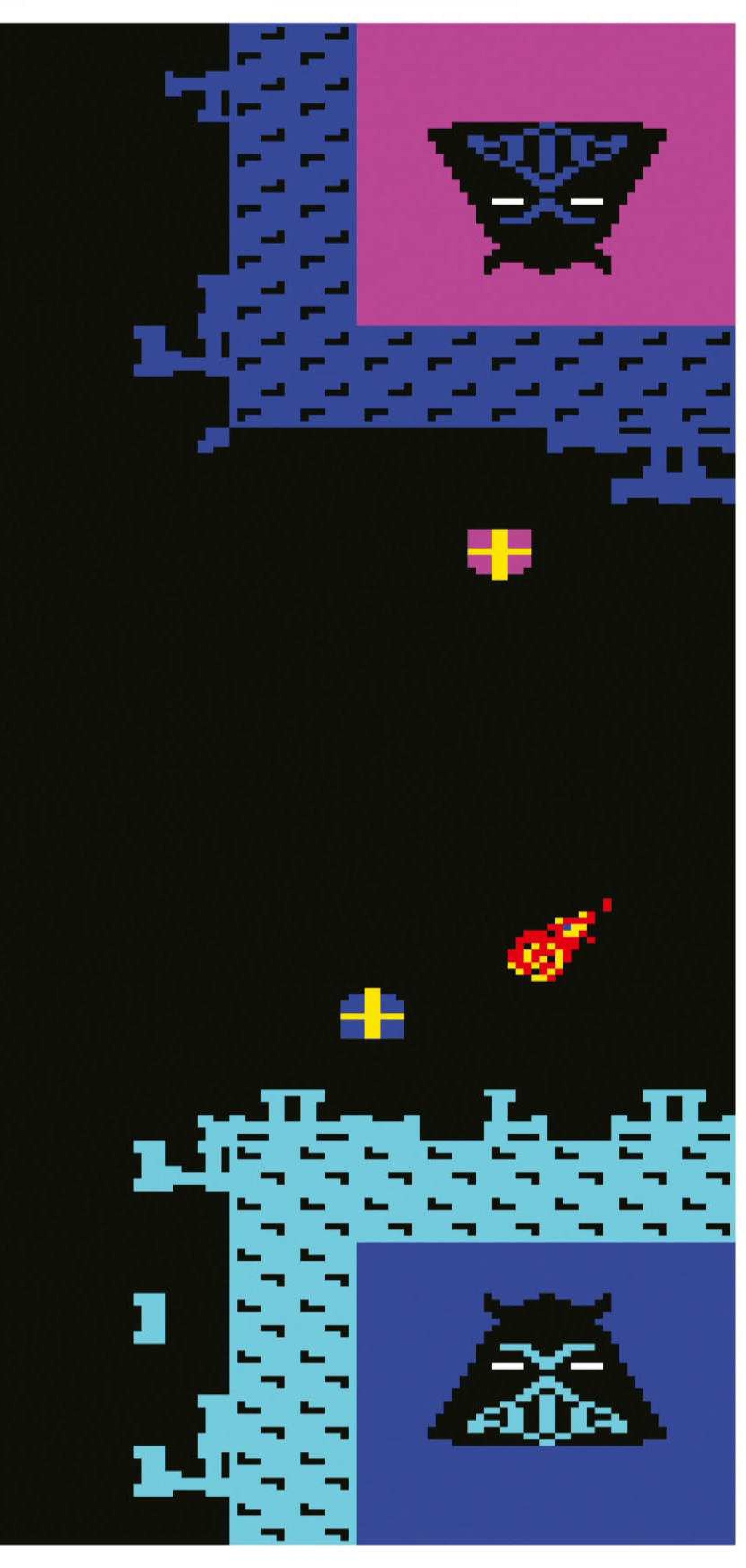
Recently I had the pleasure of visiting Arcade Club. While I enjoyed setting high scores on *Robotron: 2084*, *Shinobi* and *Strider* – which were still standing when I left many hours later – the biggest highlight of the day actually came when I sat down to order some food with my family.

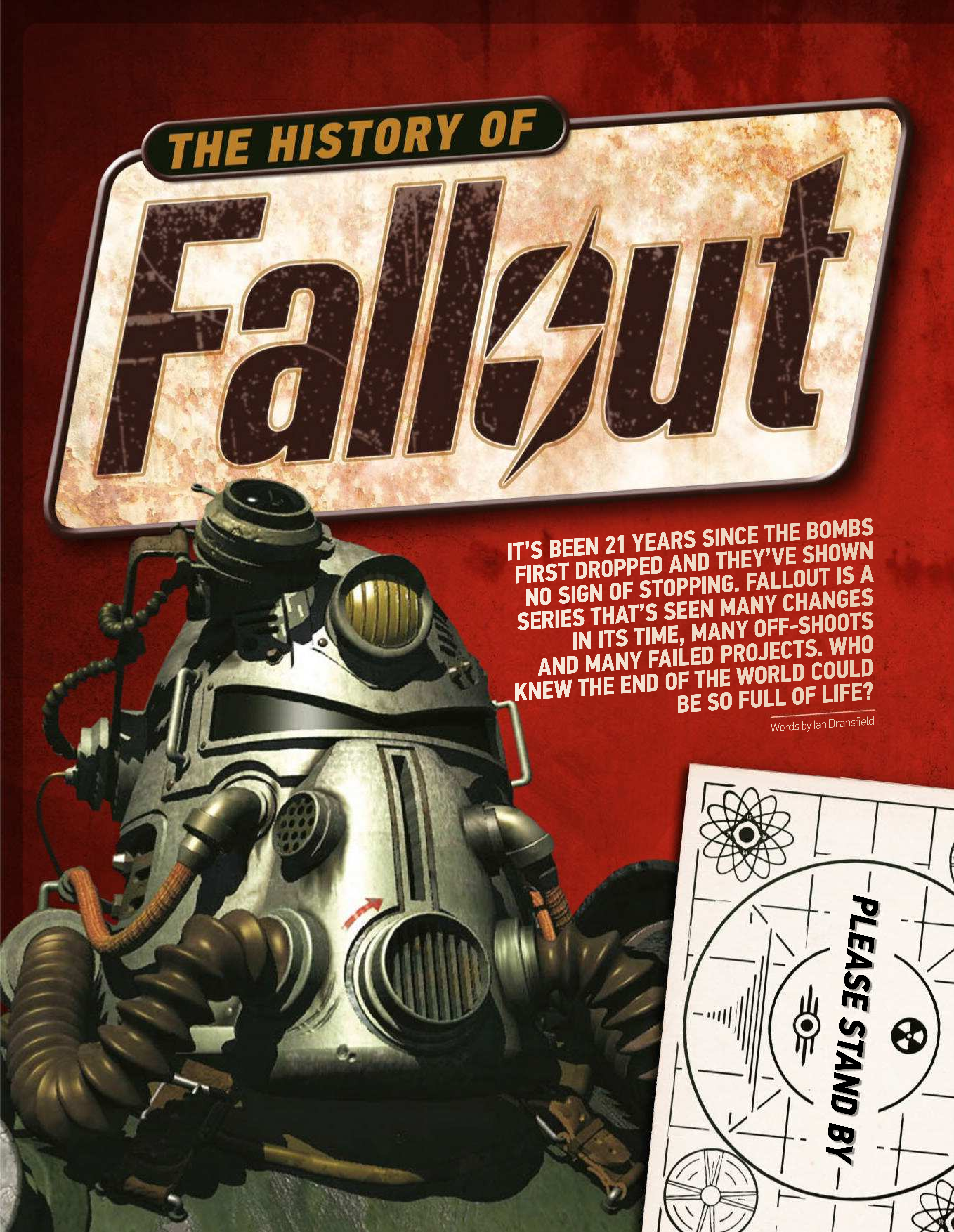
As I scooched down on a seat next to my wife, Melanie and youngest daughter, Alice, she squealed: "Daddy, the table is an arcade machine." She had vague recollections of an old MAME cocktail cab that I used to own when she was very young, but she'd never seen an authentic cocktail cabt before and she was tickled pink that we were using it as a table as we ordered our food.

As we waited for our burgers, we sat down and fired up *Warlords* because my daughter didn't believe that something that looked 'so rubbish' was as good as I was claiming it to be. Melanie and Alice instantly grasped the concept of the game, and while game one ended relatively quickly, things soon heated up as mother and daughter span spinners furiously as they both fought for supremacy on the fireball-strewn playing field across several tense games.

I was long out by this point, neglecting to join in on the next game so I could simply witness the two of them bonding over Atari's fantastically balanced game. There were a few heated words and the AI often won games, leaving both of them trailing in third and fourth place, but seeing the two of them enjoy that 38-year-old game made me realise why I love retro games so much.

Retro games don't need to have fancy graphics in order to sucker in gamers – they just need to be fun and accessible. No company knew that better than Atari and it wasn't surprising to see so many of the developer's games as I strolled around Arcade Club's main floor. What was surprising to see was just how much enjoyment a simple game could instil in my 13-year-old daughter. I wonder if *Fortnite* will have as much success with the jaded teenagers of 2056? ★





THE HISTORY OF Fallout

IT'S BEEN 21 YEARS SINCE THE BOMBS FIRST DROPPED AND THEY'VE SHOWN NO SIGN OF STOPPING. FALLOUT IS A SERIES THAT'S SEEN MANY CHANGES IN ITS TIME, MANY OFF-SHOOTS AND MANY FAILED PROJECTS. WHO KNEW THE END OF THE WORLD COULD BE SO FULL OF LIFE?

Words by Ian Dransfield



» [PC] VATS has been present in ridiculous acronym form since day one. The ability to shoot things in the groin was removed for the Bethesda era, though.



» [PC] One thing that's striking about the original two games is just how good the voice acting is. None of your Matthew 'Phone It In' Perry rubbish here.

Considering the fact war never changes, it might be surprising how much the *Fallout* series has transformed over the past two decades. Beginning life as an isometric CRPG bathed in the glow of both tabletop, pen-and-paper role-playing games and its spiritual antecedent *Wasteland*, the franchise has developed from these niche beginnings into – somewhat ironically – a world-beater. Alright, not quite a 'world-exploder', which would have been quite fitting. But close enough.

Going back to the first game now is an initial exercise in frustration – 1997's *Fallout* was, and remains, a brutally difficult, uncompromising game. If you mess up, you die. If you make the wrong decision, you die. If you don't mess up or make the wrong decision, you still die. It's dark, it's (generally) presented with a straight face, and it wants you to know that the end of the world via nuclear holocaust is as cruel and vicious a thing as it sounds.

"I had been a post-apocalyptic fiction fan since I was a kid," Brian Fargo, executive producer on *Fallout* (and founder of Interplay) tells us, "And *Wasteland* was my first attempt at bringing something to the genre. Shortly after finishing the *Wasteland* game, Interplay became a publisher and we no longer created games for other people. I tried to get EA to license me the rights back, but I was unable to succeed despite trying for many years. I finally decided we'd do our own post-apocalyptic game and call it, *Fallout*."



» Concept art for *Fallout* demonstrating a ruined, dangerous wasteland, and the humans that have to survive in it.

Sitting down with the development team, Brian Fargo and his crew at Interplay analysed what made *Wasteland* tick – what it was about the then-decade-old PC RPG that had kept people playing it so much over the years. "It was a matter of getting a small team to start bringing the project to life. To breathe humanity and charm into the game," Brian remembers. "We created a sensibilities document that spoke to points such as moral ambiguity, tactical combat, a skills based system and the attributes system. After we nailed down what was important, development went off and began working on ideas that hit the touch points."

Tim Cain is credited as the creator of *Fallout* – after all, it was his work on the game's engine that brought the world to life, with a dedicated stretch of months working alone to get the project off the ground. Early versions saw time travel, and use of the GURPS ruleset that was implemented and ultimately abandoned (more on that in a minute). "I was working on different engines while nominally tasked with making game installers," Tim explains. "I made a voxel engine, a 3D engine and finally an isometric sprite engine that I really liked. From there, I started making a combat engine based on GURPS, which I was playing paper-and-pencil with a group two or three evenings a week. That started getting some people interested in after-hours work on the game, and that grew into *Fallout*."

It sounded straightforward, but development was impacted by the fact Interplay didn't put much stock in the project. "The game did not follow a formal development process at Interplay," Tim says. "It sort of grew organically, collecting people as it did so and avoided two near cancellations as the administration felt those resources would be better spent elsewhere." The 'elsewhere' in question being big licences the studio had acquired, which it saw as the better financial option for a potential release. But Tim continued, as did a team of around 30 people, on crafting something new and original – albeit something that originally began life riffing on *Wasteland*.



» [PC] On a scale of one to DON'T AGGRO THEM, we'd say this is up there. Super Mutants are a mainstay threat of the *Fallout* series for good reason.

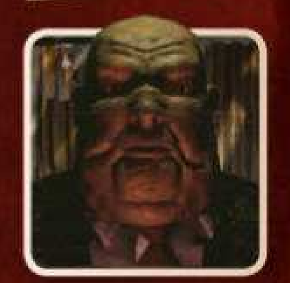


» Brian Fargo continues to dabble with the apocalypse with the *Wasteland* series.



SURVIVORS OF THE APOCALYPSE

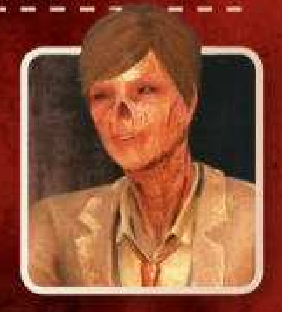
The odd folk that populate the ruined husk of our world



HUMANS

■ Not just your regular folk, but dwarves, beastfolk and swamp people, among others. Humans are the most widespread species of the post-apocalyptic futurescape, even though it was humans who caused all of this nuclear nonsense to begin with. One thing's for sure in the wasteland, though: human nature isn't very kind.

GHOULS



■ Folks who forget to slip, slap and slop with their factor 5 million in the wasteland end up a little worse for wear as irradiated, skinless ghouls. Many you encounter maintain their faculties and operate largely as normal human beings. For some, prolonged exposure to radiation has eaten up their brains, and they roam the lands as feral zombies.



SUPER MUTANTS

■ Humans 'dipped' into Forced Evolutionary Virus (FEV) goo sometimes – not always – result in super mutants: gigantic brutes, usually dumb, sometimes smart, always extremely dangerous. A mainstay of the series since day one, super mutants tend to be on the antagonistic side of things, but every now and then you get a friendly one.

ROBOTS

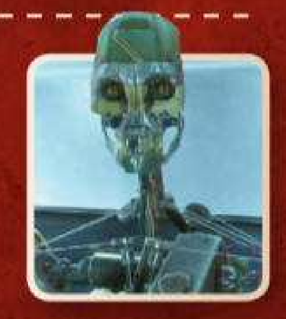


■ Robots come in all shapes and sizes and are everywhere throughout the entire series, friend or foe, and the Fifties sci-fi feel of *Fallout* is helped a great deal by them – none more than by the Protectrons: your standard security bots who just happen to look strikingly like *Forbidden Planet*'s Robby The Robot.

ALIENS

■ It wasn't until the third game that the aliens made an actual, living appearance, but plenty of spaceships of theirs crashed across the wasteland from the first game on. Intelligent and cunning, these blighters are as mysterious as they are rare – though the rumblings are they could have been behind the Great War.

SYNTHS



■ The post-apocalyptic kids on the block, synths are one of the few new technologies to arise after the bombs have dropped. Based on prewar technology, synths were created to mimic – and be indistinguishable from – humans. Nick Valentine, arguably *Fallout*'s greatest companion, is a synth, though it's quite easy to tell.

"WE WERE ALL WORKING TOGETHER IN THE SAME DIRECTION. THERE WAS LITTLE CLASH OF EGOS"

Tim Cain



» Tim Cain still works on RPGs today and is currently based at Obsidian Entertainment.

One system introduced in the original *Fallout* was a bespoke creation, and has remained one of few constants in the series: SPECIAL. Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility and Luck all came into play in shaping your character – you might have gone for a brute with low IQ, making you unable to converse with smarter NPCs, or maybe you wanted to solve everything with your wit and suave, charismatic nature: the tools were set with this deceptively simple formula.

And it almost wasn't to be. "*Fallout* was originally a GURPS game," says Chris Taylor, lead designer on *Fallout*. GURPS was a tabletop system developed by Steve Jackson Games; standing for Generic Universal Role Playing System, it was made to be used across all forms of role-playing, and the folks behind *Fallout* thought it would be a great fit. GURPS was licensed, and work began on *Fallout: A GURPS Post-Nuclear Adventure*, as it was called early on.

Things didn't turn out well, though. "We showed the opening movie with the prisoner being shot in the head while waving at the camera and Steve Jackson was not fond of it, to say the least," says Brian Fargo, "I knew the kind of world we were building and that opening scene was just a warm up to the brutal world of *Fallout*, so I terminated the deal."

Needing a replacement, Chris Taylor turned to a nascent ruleset he'd been working on in his own time. "I wrote my own RPG system on the back of three-by-five cards, in notebooks and on scraps of grid paper. My game was called *MediEvil*. It was not good. So [my friend and I] played *D&D* instead. But I kept those notes and would work on the game every now and then for a decade – when it came time to replace GURPS, I had something to work with," he says,

» [PC] When society crumbles, it's the degenerates who take hold. How very prescient *Fallout* is.





» [PC] Michael Dorn – *Star Trek*'s Worf – turn as Marcus, the former follower of the Master, proved a fine companion. His return in *New Vegas* was much appreciated.

"The team took the system and made it work. We took it and adapted it; it had the statistics and skills we needed, but Perks were created specifically for *Fallout* to replace the GURPS advantage/disadvantage traits."

This sort of synergy wasn't something you got often in development – it still isn't – but it lent itself nicely to the mythos behind what *Fallout* would become. "The team on *Fallout* had a very special vibe," Tim remembers, "We were all working together to go in the same direction. There was very little clash of egos or desire to pull the game in a different direction. That is rare in development.

"*Fallout* was always seen as a B project at Interplay," he continues, "At least until the last few months of development. It is frustrating to see something in your game that no one outside the team can see until almost the last moment before it is complete."

The team could see it, though, and those who played *Fallout* were treated to a deep, original, and incredibly bleak look at a world ravaged by nuclear war. Survival was hard, but you were presented with more than just guns and knives to make your way through the world. Your words were just as deadly, and the game's final boss encounter could see players with high enough charisma talk the big bad into killing himself after convincing him of how wrong he was. This was unprecedented in computer gaming at the time, and was testament to the incredible work Tim Cain and the team carried out.

Before the original had even released, however, work on the sequel began – "*Fallout* really caused a buzz in the studio about six months before it was released," Tim explains, "QA staff were coming in nights and weekends, on their own time without pay, to play it. So *Fallout 2* was started even before *Fallout* shipped." A small project for Interplay had become a labour of love for those working on it, and when the review scores – and money – did start coming in for the first game, it became a labour of business love for the brass at the publisher, too. *Fallout 2* would launch exactly one year after the original.

Safe now in the realms of 20-year-old rose-tinted reminiscence, we remember the sequel fondly and laugh at its more light-hearted take on the series. But revisiting the time of its inception, development, and release brings back memories of a tumultuous ▶

Nuka Cola

WEIRD WASTELANDS

The easter eggs of Fallout



UFO CRASH

FALLOUT 1-4, NEW VEGAS

■ If there's a *Fallout*, there's a UFO crash somewhere along the way. And usually sweet alien loot to bag, like the awfully useful and high-powered Alien Blaster. Keep on crashing, alien friends.



OLD-ISH SCROLLS

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

■ An acknowledgement of where the modern *Fallout* games owe a lot of their existence: some lampposts in Freeside have 'TES-04' engraved on them, referencing the then-upcoming *Elder Scrolls IV: Skyrim*.



MONTY PYTHON

FALLOUT 2

■ You run into odd folk in the wasteland, like a bunch of so-called knights headed by a chap called Arthur on their way to find a 'holy hand grenade'. You can pretend to help, but they still don't know where the GECK is.



THE TARDIS

FALLOUT

■ To say this encounter is a bit on the nose is an understatement: you're in the wild, you stumble upon an old police box, its light starts flashing and it fades from the scene. You just got *Doctor Who*'d, kid.

RAIDER OF THE LOST FRIDGE

NEW VEGAS

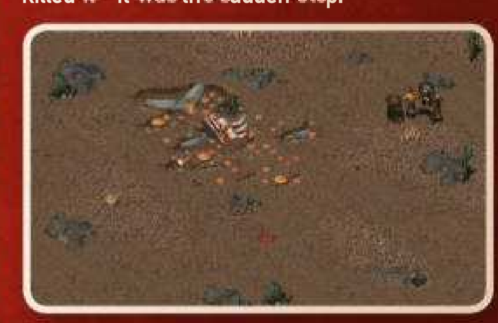
■ A more realistic recreation of the scene we've tried to burn from our memories, in which Indiana Jones hid safely from a nearby nuclear explosion inside a fridge. In this version, all that's left is a skeleton and hat.



DON'T PANIC!

FALLOUT 2

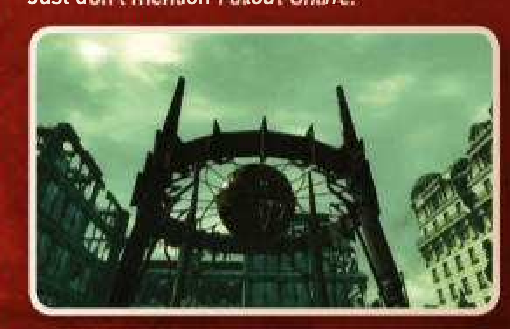
■ *The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy* is your usual reference point for ultranerds, and *Fallout 2* is no exception. The whale has fallen from a great height, though that's not what killed it – it was the sudden stop.



THE OTHER GUYS

FALLOUT 3

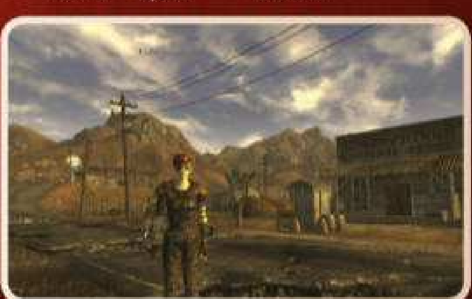
■ For all the legal issues and a certain fall from grace, Bethesda still managed to give props to original publisher Interplay with this structure looking the spitting image of the latter's logo. Just don't mention *Fallout Online*.



MAD MAX

FALLOUT 1-4, NEW VEGAS

■ The leather armour in the *Fallout* series is synonymous now with the games that it's easy to forget it was based on the outfit worn by Max Rockatansky in the *Mad Max* films. Shame that the Interceptor doesn't show up, though.



APOCALYPSE NOW

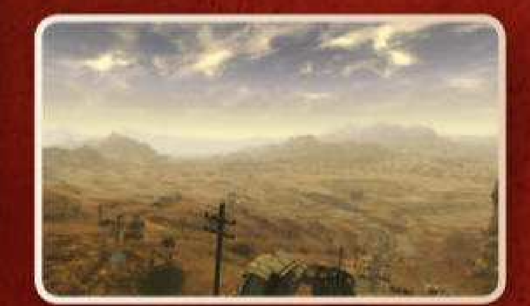
Where Fallout takes place



OREGON

FALLOUT 2

■ The game's starting – and focal – village of Arroyo, located in Oregon, was settled by the original game's protagonist after their expulsion from Vault 13. That said, the journey of the second game's character takes in many places from the original, almost a century later.



MOJAVE WASTELAND

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

■ This wasteland enveloped Las Vegas – with Bethesda focused on the east coast, Obsidian was free to return to the west, as many of its staff had worked on with the originals. While relatively untouched by nuclear war, the desert proved a fine setting for a *Fallout*.



MIDWEST

FALLOUT TACTICS

■ Taking in Chicago, Kansas, and Colorado, the *Tactics* spin-off might not be considered canon by Bethesda, but it does tell the tale of an expansionist group known as the Brotherhood Of Steel which thinks its opinion is The One That Counts. Which, honestly, sounds pretty canonical to us.



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

FALLOUT 4

■ Back to the east coast, Bethesda took great pains to recreate many elements of the home of witches and Sam Adams – you got plenty of coastline, plenty of baseball (in city form), and plenty of reference to the American Revolution. Whatever your feelings on the game as a whole, the setting was ideal.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

FALLOUT

■ It's not recognisable as the California we know, and the Vault Dweller's journey doesn't take them through recognisably-named towns – what was once Bakersfield is Necropolis, and there's part of what was Los Angeles in the Boneyard. But that's the appeal of the original: the world ended, and here's how it picked itself up and restarted.



TEXAS

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

■ What better place to set a *Fallout* game than somewhere that's already a desert full of guns? Texas probably hasn't changed much after the bombs dropped, though the scorpions are a bit bigger, and it would have made a superb setting for a core *Fallout* game. Such a shame it was wasted on this poor spin-off.



WEST VIRGINIA

FALLOUT 76

■ Being a multiplayer offering, *Fallout 76* aims not to recreate one city and its suburbs but instead goes back to the classic method of making a whole region – maybe even state. West Virginia is the setting for players to go out and recolonise the world, and to try not to nuke each other into oblivion. Again.



WASHINGTON DC

FALLOUT 3

■ Bethesda made the smart decision to pare things back when it took over, with *Fallout 3* focusing on a single city (and its outskirts) rather than a vast geographical region in the States. The statement of intent behind featuring a devastated White House was notably impressive.

> **"FALLOUT 2 WAS A SLAPDASH PROJECT WITHOUT A LOT OF OVERSIGHT"**
> *Chris Avellone*

time in development – and a fanbase backlash that took many by surprise.

"Behind the scenes you will always find that it's very intense with the creative leads battling for their perspective," Brian says, "But that is nothing more than the creative process at work. Getting *Fallout 2* off the ground was a bit painful but other than that I don't have any specific memories of negative things. It was an all-star cast of talent all pulling in the right direction." While the then-Interplay boss looked back on the experience as a positive with some 'battling', those working in the trenches were privy to a much more tumultuous, fatiguing experience working on *Fallout 2*.

One factor that stood out more than others was the fact Tim, along with two other big names in the first game, Leonard Boyarsky and Jason Anderson, all quit developer Black Isle Studios during *Fallout 2*'s creation. While based on ideas from the three – "We just left work for a whole day and brainstormed until we came up with the right design, which, if I recall correctly, was accepted as is without any revisions," explains Leonard, art director on the first game – it had become a project pushed by corporate desire rather than personal motivation, with an exceedingly short development timeframe for such a huge project, and a leadership vacuum in the wake of Tim and co's leaving.

"We had no idea any of this was going on," says Chris Avellone, designer and writer on *Fallout 2* and *New Vegas*. "Next thing we knew, Feargus [Urquhart] was calling an emergency meeting in Black Isle and rapidly passing out area designs for *Fallout 2*, splitting the game areas up amongst the available – and even unavailable – designers. We all got drafted and got to work. I was working on *Planescape: Torment* at the time, so my double-duty on two RPGs began.

"It did feel like the heart of the team had gone," he continues. "And all that was left were a bunch of developers working on different aspects of the game like a big patchwork beast – but there wasn't a good 'spine' or 'heart' to the game, we were just making content as fast as we could."

That patchwork approach to development led to a tonal clash throughout *Fallout 2*. Where the first game was dark, the second included wacky references to Monty Python, *Hitchhiker's Guide To the Galaxy*, *Godzilla* and more. Some were genuinely funny, sure, but plenty were off-target. "I think the loss of Leonard and Jason accounted for a lot of the loss of the dark tone," Tim Cain explains. "And my personal rule of 'no jokes or cultural references that made no sense to the player who didn't understand them' was thrown aside after I left development."

Chris Avellone admits he was guilty of placing a few gags and references, but the designer still wasn't a fan of how things were being put together, even if it was fun to put in a joke you liked, or a reference to a character you thought might be cool. "*Fallout 2* was a slapdash project without a lot of oversight. Management didn't have the time," he says, "As a result, people just threw in things they thought were funny – even things like character models you didn't know what you were going to get."

The fedora and Tommy gun-toting thugs in New Reno, whose character models don't even look like they belong in the game, were presented to Chris Avellone without him even asking for them. "They were just done," he explains, "And I had to make use of them even though they didn't have the right 'feel'… but then again, not much of New Reno did, even though there were a lot of things you could do in town."

There was a lot to do throughout all of *Fallout 2*. The game itself hardly developed from what the first had been – it was painting over the ▶



» [PC] A series about lonesome wanderers doesn't seem right to feature a car, but *Fallout 2*'s vehicle was absolutely necessary to get about.



» [PC] Turn-based was a choice in *Tactics*, but really this was a run-and-gun strategic shooter – and all the better for it.



» Chris Avellone is a veteran game writer, having worked on a trove of well-received RPGS and cerebral titles.



» Concept art for *Fallout 3* shows an early version of Rivet City, the biggest settlement in the Capital Wasteland.



» [PC] *Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance* translated very well to console. *Fallout*… did not, even if the references were there.



» After producing *Fallout 3*, Gavin Carter moved to work on *Halo 4*.



» Leonard Boyarsky has worked with Blizzard in recent years on its *Diablo* franchise.

original to create new content. But it was still superb fun, and the tonal differences with the first game actually amassed an army of diehards demanding humour in their *Fallout* games to this day. And when *Fallout 2* wanted to do serious, or wanted you to see the consequences of your actions – well, just check what happens when you get 'slaver' tattooed on your face for a lark (spoiler: you essentially ruin your game as hardly anybody of importance will deal with you).

Fallout 2 released after around a year of development – compared to the original's three years. In that time the team made a new part of the world to explore, a vast amount of new stories to tell – they even gave you a car. It was an impressive feat, yet still one that rubbed *Fallout* diehards up the wrong way. *Fallout*'s creator, though, remained positive even though he'd left the project: "I have always been impressed that the team could make a game that was much bigger than the original in a third of the time," Tim Cain says. "They should be enormously proud of their achievement."

The problems arising through *Fallout 2*'s confused development would set a pattern for the years to follow at Interplay, and the second game would end up being the last *core* title in the franchise by the publisher. Though that's not to say it didn't try launching a bunch of projects, but ultimately these didn't get off the ground. In the period between the second and third games came a couple of releases: one with some good ideas; one best left forgotten. But whatever the case, *Fallout* was long from being pronounced dead.

In 2001, *Fallout Tactics* arrived – a spin-off focusing entirely on the combat aspects of the original two games, it was a decent foray into a world like Jagged Alliance, though the 'tactical' aspect went down the drain a bit and it ended up being a lot more run-and-gun than might be expected.

"I was very happy with what the developer Micro Forte did with *Fallout Tactics*," Chris Taylor, who acted as senior designer on the game, says, "But I'll admit that it wasn't exactly the game that we envisioned early in the project's preproduction. When games are nothing but ideas, it's easy to get excited about the concept of a game. Then reality usually steps in. Compromises are made. In *Fallout Tactics*' case, it shipped earlier than it should have. It could have used a little more time baking."

"WE WANTED TO MORE FULLY REALISE A VISION OF A POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE"
Gavin Carter

While *Tactics* was appreciated by some, and has grown in prestige as the years passed, the other spin-off Interplay managed to get out – *Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel* – was less well-received. A consoleified version of *Fallout* ala *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, the game was, at best, dull. At worst? A stain on the reputation of the series. But Interplay wasn't just focused on the spin-offs – it was working on an actual *Fallout 3*.

Codenamed *Van Buren*, Interplay's take on *Fallout 3* never made it to a finished state before it was cancelled. "Brian Fargo was gone by that point," Chris Avellone explains. "And the vision for the company went along with him. And while we knew the company needed to turn a profit, we were starting to feel it in the trenches." The first *Fallout 3* was cancelled, and ultimately the franchise moved on to new owners, with its original custodian Interplay – eventually – losing all rights to *Fallout*.

In 2008, we saw something unexpected: the studio behind the *Elder Scrolls* series of first-person role-playing games had released its own version of *Fallout 3*. It was an immediate hit, immersing players in a post-apocalyptic wasteland (obviously) of Washington DC – changing things up significantly, while at the same time keeping the fundamentals, like the SPECIAL and VATS targeting systems, as they were. It was brand new and exciting, while at the same time completely familiar.

"There was always a desire in those days to make Bethesda Game Studios into more than just 'the *Elder Scrolls* team'," explains Gavin Carter, lead producer on *Fallout 3*. "There was a lot of musing about what might



» [PC] The iconography throughout the whole *Fallout* series has been a constant high point, with many ads the sort of thing you'd want printed out hanging from your walls.



make a great second project. I don't recall the exact moment I found out that it was going to be *Fallout*, but it was definitely in our conversations. I remember it moved quite rapidly from 'wouldn't it be cool if…' to 'maybe there's a chance but don't get your hopes up,' to 'time to start project planning.'"

Fallout 3 presented a detailed, vast world placed right in front of the player – and a shift back to the more straight-faced serious tone of the original game. After all, war is *supposed* to be hell. It was an intentional move in tone, Gavin tells us, because – while the second mainline *Fallout* game is an all-time great – these things felt like distractions to the team at Bethesda. "We wanted to more fully realise a vision of a post-apocalyptic future," he says, "And felt that too much humour pulled you out of the experience more than it contributed."

The move into sci-fi, away from the studio's usual fantasy, was a challenge the team was willing to take on. While its detractors would call it '*Oblivion* with guns', the fact is *Fallout 3* was a huge accomplishment for Bethesda and the series as a whole. And it was a positive experience for the team working on it too, contrary to the years previous over at Interplay: "I remember watching people work for months to get the ending Liberty Prime sequence just right," Gavin Carter says, "The PS3 team crunching for weeks to fix a VATS crash bug, playing VATS after Todd [Howard] and a programmer and artist huddled on it for two weeks and finally got it working well… concept art feedback meetings – 'That minigun looks way too much like a Dyson vacuum, sorry,' walking by cubicles and seeing our VFX artist with a curtain and a warning sign up because he was gathering gore reference, the first time we got dismemberment working and were blowing up 3D people over and over again."

Bethesda had to return to its *Elder Scrolls* series, moving on to what became *Skyrim* – but it didn't want to leave *Fallout* behind, so it turned to Obsidian Entertainment, a studio made up of many folks who worked on the first two *Fallout* games, as well as the cancelled *Van Buren*. "The team was working on

» [PC] Imagine a mudcrab gone nuclear with its angry dad behind it, and that's all the explanation you'll ever need for this situation.

NUKED
The cancelled games of Fallout



FALLOUT EXTREME
CANCELLED: 2000 / **PLATFORM:** PS2, XBOX

■ A tactical shooter playable from a first or third-person perspective, *Fallout Extreme* never made it past the conceptual stage. Which is a shame, as on paper it sounded like *Hired Guns* in the *Fallout* universe. The planned storyline would take players outside of the US, into territories such as Russia, Mongolia and – ultimately – China, marking the first time a *Fallout* game would have left the States. *Extreme* was cancelled after little more than an outline and some concept sketches were made.

FALLOUT TACTICS 2
CANCELLED: 2001 / **PLATFORM:** PC

■ Around the time the original *Tactics* released, preproduction work began on a sequel. Sadly sales of the first game weren't up to expected levels, and Interplay cancelled the project. Surviving today are some sketches of mutant crocodiles – it would have taken place in areas such as Florida – and a general idea behind the story, which would have incorporated an irradiated GECK. The resultant mutated Garden Of Eden would have been a cool twist on *Fallout*'s eternal quest to restore a perfect world.



VAN BUREN
CANCELLED: 2003 / **PLATFORM:** PC

■ Created using the engine Black Isle made for *Baldur's Gate 3* (also cancelled), this original incarnation of *Fallout 3* was under the stewardship of eventual *New Vegas* alums Chris Avellone and Josh Sawyer. Set across Arizona, Nevada, Colorado and Utah, the game would see players in the role as a prisoner and some tweaks to established systems, like SPECIAL. A tech demo was released, but ultimately Interplay decided to channel funds towards *Icewind Dale* instead, and the project died.

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL 2
CANCELLED: 2004 / **PLATFORM:** PS2

■ A bit of a double-edged one this: it's sad that *BOS2* never released, as it was close to completion when development was shut down thanks to Interplay layoffs. On the other hand, the first game was pretty much awful, so it doesn't feel like the greatest loss. The sequel did feature elements like Caeser's Legion and the Jackals – both borrowed from *Van Buren* and both making an appearance in *New Vegas* – as well as another appearance of the irradiated GECK. Still, it wasn't to be.





PROJECT V13
CANCELLED: 2012 / **PLATFORM:** PC

■ *V13* was the name of two projects from Interplay and a reformed Black Isle Studios. The first was an MMO, *Fallout Online*, which was put together by Masthead Studios with Interplay as publisher – a legal dispute from Bethesda popped up, and the project was cancelled. A second attempt saw *V13* rebranded as nothing to do with *Fallout*, tried to raise money via crowdfunding, then quietly disappeared some time after with nothing to show for it.



WORLDS OF TOMORROW

Six of the best Fallout vaults



VAULT 108 CLONING

FALLOUT 3

■ Cloning to perpetuate a populace makes sense in a limited genetic pool situation like being in a vault, but only if more than one person is cloned. Sadly, Vault 108 ended up just cloning Gary over and over again, resulting in a group of vault dwellers violently aggressive towards anyone not called – or saying, repeatedly – 'Gary'.



VAULT 13 PROLONGED ISOLATION

FALLOUT 2

■ The original Vault 13 was meant to be a control; never opened in order to study the effects of prolonged isolation. It was opened up in the first game, though, and by the time it's revisited in the second game has been colonised by a group of intelligent, speaking deathclaws. They say more than just 'Gary'.



VAULT 75 ENHANCE THE GENE POOL

FALLOUT 4

■ Built under a school, every student and parent had a place in Vault 75 – only when the door closed, adults and children were split, the former executed, and the latter had experiments and intense learning experiments performed on them to make them 'better' people. The experiment, you'll be unsurprised to learn, failed.



» *Fallout* has come a long was since the first game, but its emphasis on survival in a hostile, familiar world still endures.

Fallout 3 DLC and getting ramped up and excited about *Skyrim*," Gavin explains. "So they understood we couldn't do everything on our own. I think people also realised that the choice to work with Obsidian, given their history with the franchise and the quality of work that they do, was a smart one." *Fallout: New Vegas* was the ultimate result, and ended up another example of a fine game arriving despite almost everything behind the scenes working against it.

"The biggest problem was just scope," Chris Avellone explains. "The game was too big and there was too much added in the time frame – and as we neared the ship date, the game still had a lot of bugs that were unaddressed." Patches came, but they impacted the upcoming DLC, which required more work – and the pattern repeated. "It was even more difficult than it sounds," he continues. "Because the patches and the fixes became moving targets as balancing changes started getting introduced with



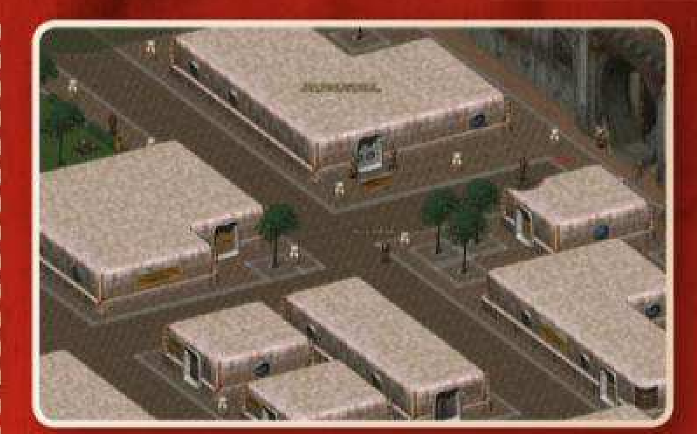


VAULT 22

UNDERGROUND ALLOTMENT

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

■ Making Vault 22 the place where its denizens would be kept alive just by using things grown inside it is another experiment from Vault-Tec that sort of made sense. Sadly, a mutagenic fungus managed to make its way inside and things went downhill, fast. Heed the sign outside that says 'THE PLANTS KILL' – it doesn't lie.



VAULT 8

CONTROL

FALLOUT 2

■ A vault designed and manufactured correctly, set to open on time and with a population that set about rebuilding soon after it received the all-clear? Where's the fun in that? Well, Vault 8 – and Vault City, which sprang from it – shows just how well things could have gone were it not for all the wacky experiments going on elsewhere.



VAULT 12

RADIATION EFFECTS ON HUMANS

FALLOUT

■ How to test the effects of radiation on people where they're in a radiation-proof bunker? Just don't close the gigantic door and let the green stuff flow in. This horrific fate met the denizens of Vault 12, and those who survived were turned into ghouls. They made the most of it, and the city of Necropolis was formed after the war.

"THE GAME WAS TOO BIG AND THERE WAS TOO MUCH ADDED IN THE TIME FRAME"

Chris Avellone

patches, and sometimes those would break critical path quests."

New Vegas was riddled with bugs – released too soon, it had some game-breaking issues and was immediately lambasted for performance issues across all formats. While it went on to become one of the most beloved entries to the series – with deep systems of interaction and role-playing, it really harked back to the original Black Isle titles – the initial reaction was enough to make people think this had been a misstep. And then there is the infamous Metacritic scoring incident, where Obsidian had been promised performance-based incentives for achieving a Metacritic rating of 85 or above. *New Vegas* ended up on 84. People lost their jobs as no bonus came in.

Despite all of that, *New Vegas* went down as a cult classic and has, over the years, cemented itself as the best in the series for a certain subsection of the *Fallout* fanbase. Fixed with subsequent patches and added to with some genuinely brilliant DLC expansions, *New Vegas* served as the balance between Bethesda's new 3D approach, and Black Isle/Interplay's focus on traditional RPG mechanics. But the experience was fraught, and Obsidian's crack of the whip proved a one-off.

Bethesda did of course return to the sci-fi series with *Fallout 4* – another step away from the pure form of the original, bringing in elements of construction and crafting… as well as paid-for mods. While well-received in its own right, the fourth game was never going to hit all the right notes with the old school purists. A good game? Definitely. A great *Fallout* game? That's up for debate.

Fallout is a series that has changed a gigantic amount since its inception – possibly more than any other series in gaming. At the same time, however, its central themes of the apocalypse, the fundamental nature of humanity, and the need for some sturdy rope in a survival situation have all passed through the decades to make up core tenets of the series. It's different to what it used to be, but it is still loved – even by the creator who abandoned it: "*Fallout* will always be my baby, even if it was adopted by another family," says Tim Cain.

An additional bonus of *Fallout*'s success has been the resurrection of the series that inspired it. Brian Fargo's current studio, InXile, was able to crowdfund *Wasteland 2* – "Everything I learned from *Wasteland* I put into *Fallout* and everything I learned from *Fallout* I put into *Wasteland 2*," Brian Fargo tells us – back in 2014, and at the time of writing work is underway on *Wasteland 3*, with none other than Chris Avellone contributing. "[There's a lot of *Van Buren* in] *Wasteland 3*," he says, "We used a lot of the pillars of *Van Buren* to guide design decisions in tandem with the Lead Designer, George Ziets, who took the high-level concepts and then made them appropriate for the *Fallout* universe."

Meanwhile, Bethesda has knocked together something we never thought we'd see: an online version of *Fallout*. Bringing together multiplayer and the wasteland is something that's been talked about – and tried – since day one, but it took some 21 years to make it happen. This is a new era: one of exploration and discovery, less of reading walls of text and relying on tabletop mechanics. And if anyone can truly set the world on fire, it's probably going to be Bethesda. If only because Interplay legally can't.



» [PC] Few areas in the whole series capture the horror of a nuclear wasteland quite like the fourth game's Glowing Sea.



» [PC] That feeling when *New Vegas*' town of Novac's name suddenly makes sense to you.

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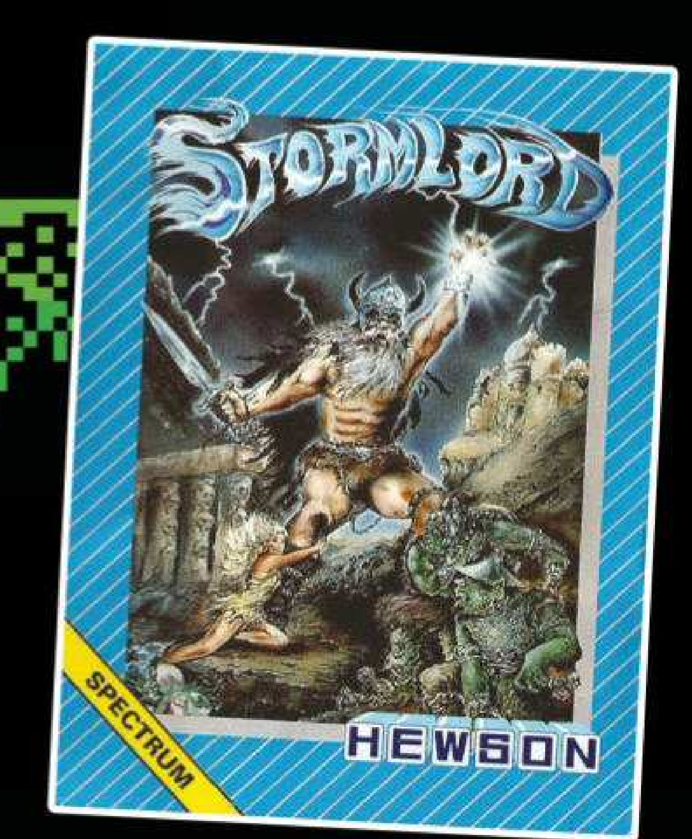


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THE MAKING OF STORMLORD



After producing a trio of hit sci-fi titles for Hewson Consultants, Raffaele Cecco decided to go in a different direction. Retro Gamer learns how this led the celebrated developer to create his fantasy puzzler Stormlord

Words by Rory Milne

Raffaele Cecco's late Eighties' sci-fi shooters *Exolon, Cybernoid* and *Cybernoid II* were loved by gamers and the press alike, and so you might imagine that the designer would've been tempted to continue this run with a fourth sci-fi title. When asked, however, he explains that this wasn't really a consideration. "I was simply bored with the whole sci-fi space genre, as my last few games had been of that type," Raffaele admits. "Although when I designed the games I was more concerned with how the game objects interacted at a more abstract level, rather than allowing the 'space' environment to guide the design of the gameplay. So the sci-fi graphics were just decoration really. However, as I was still drawing my own graphics at that point the thought of being able to explore some different styles was appealing."

The different style that Raffaele settled on for his latest project was fantasy, which the developer largely credits to his reading and listening habits at the time. "I'd read *Lord Of The Rings*, and I was listening to a lot of early Queen music at that point," Raffaele notes. "Along with their popular commercial releases, they made quite a few more obscure songs alluding to fairies and other fantasy ideas. I thought that whole fantasy environment was packed with nice ideas, so I decided to run with it. As usual, Hewson was very supportive and didn't mind taking risks with something different."

With a genre in place, Raffaele's thoughts next turned to gameplay, and although it's often supposed that the designer's work in progress – *Stormlord* – took his earlier title *Exolon* as a starting point, this wasn't the case. "I can't say that *Stormlord* was a successor to *Exolon*," Raffaele argues. "For a start, *Stormlord* was a scrolling game whereas *Exolon* was flip-screen. There was probably more similarity to *Equinox*, thinking about it, as that had more of an open environment to explore than *Exolon* or *Cybernoid*. Looking at the games, you can see a kind of similarity, as all the graphics were drawn by me and I adopted a style that fit my limited abilities as an artist."



» [ZX Spectrum] The puzzles in *Stormlord* often involve a long trek to find a required object.

One artistic ability that the developer considered to be beyond him was the animation of *Stormlord*'s Viking-like player character, and so he secured the services of the artist who had created the main sprite for *Exolon* – Nigel Brownjohn, although the animator was subsequently asked to give his first draft of *Stormlord* a bit of a makeover. "It looked a bit like *Shrek*!" Raffaele says of the initial appearance of his protagonist. "I'd have to speculate about what happened with the character, but I'm guessing it was a rejected first draft from the animator, Nigel Brownjohn, who also animated the Exolon character – I couldn't animate people. It looked more like a baddie than a hero, and I have a vague recollection that Hewson didn't like it. I don't think his rocket backpack actually did anything, especially if it was an early draft, so it would have been a straight graphics-swap. The final character was more of a generic, bearded fantasy hero, but I guess the horns poking out of his helmet gave him that Viking vibe."







IN THE KNOW

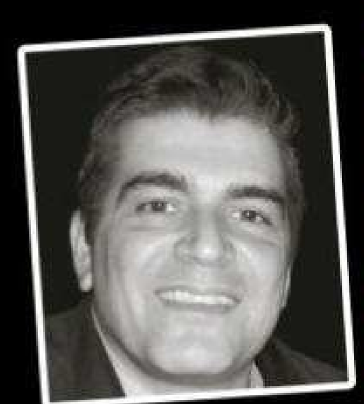
» PUBLISHER: HEWSON CONSULTANTS

» DEVELOPER: RAFFAELE CECCO AND NICK JONES

» RELEASED: 1989

» PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS

» GENRE: RUN-AND-GUN



» Raffaele Cecco has worked on a number of 8-bit classics for Hewson Consultants.





» [ZX Spectrum] The springboards in *Stormlord* can catapult the game's hero great distances across the night sky.

» [ZX Spectrum] A couple of *Stormlord*'s opponents are chess pieces that fit nicely into the game's surreal world.



Aside from *Stormlord*'s main character, Raffaele handled all of the other animation duties for his evolving game himself, which thanks to the designer's then favourite rock band included waves of deadly pawns and knights. "Again, going back to me listening to early Queen music, there was a track called *March Of The Black Queen*," the developer recalls. "That track always made me think of a chess game for obvious reasons, so I popped in some chess pieces. I actually thought they went rather well with the fantasy/fairy based ideas. Also, the fact that they didn't require any animation made them extra appealing, as I could just slide them along the ground."

However, animation was definitely required for one particularly innovative mechanic that Raffaele devised, where springboards launched *Stormlord* into a night sky filled with stars allowing the hero to travel great distances over the fairy realm that his quest took place in. "Underneath the fancy flying animation, this feature was really just a teleporter – the same as the ones in *Equinox* and *Exolon*," Raffaele contends. "Being able to move instantly from one area of the map to another opened up all sorts of nice puzzle/gameplay options and allowed me to use all the areas of the environment. So the feature was put in as a useful game design tool."

But even in situations where springboards weren't available, Raffaele ensured gravity wouldn't be too much of a problem for his hero by giving him both a standard and a supercharged jump. "I liked the *R-Type* energiser, but I don't think that was the influence," Raffaele muses. "I don't really remember what influenced the variable height jump, but the idea was probably based around making the character more responsive and giving me more flexibility in how I could design levels. For example, I could force the player to make quick, short jumps in certain areas, whereas in others they would need big leaps to clear an obstacle."

The designer also had another mechanic under development that worked in a similar way, with its purpose being to arm his game's hero with short-range thunderbolts and long-range swords activated by tapping or holding down the fire button. "Rather like the variable height jump, the different weapons allowed me add more gameplay variety," Raffaele reasons. "The idea was that the player could pretty much complete the game with one weapon, but by being a bit smarter

CONVERSION CAPERS

How all the different Stormlord versions stack up

AMSTRAD CPC



■ Given that the CPC *Stormlord* was developed by the same team that made the Spectrum original, its no surprise that the two games are similar. Besides its colourful visuals, the main difference with the Amstrad port is that some of its waves of opponents are triggered earlier while others are less angry.

C64



■ Coded by the original's cocreator Nick Jones with graphics by Hugh Binns. The C64 *Stormlord* has a catchy chiptune, but its biggest departure from the original is that it has far less enemies, which naturally makes it a bit easier than the game its based on.

ATARI ST



■ Rather than coloured versions of the bitmaps from the Spectrum, as earlier 16-bit Hewson ports used, the ST *Stormlord* has new visuals that take advantage of the Atari system's graphics hardware. Besides improved aesthetics, the ST *Stormlord* adds two extra levels set in a castle.

AMIGA



■ Essentially a better-sounding version of the ST *Stormlord*, the Amiga version boasts the same two additional levels and redesigned visuals. Like the ST iteration, the Amiga *Stormlord* has less intense waves than the Spectrum version, which often bare little resemblance to the creatures in the original.

PC



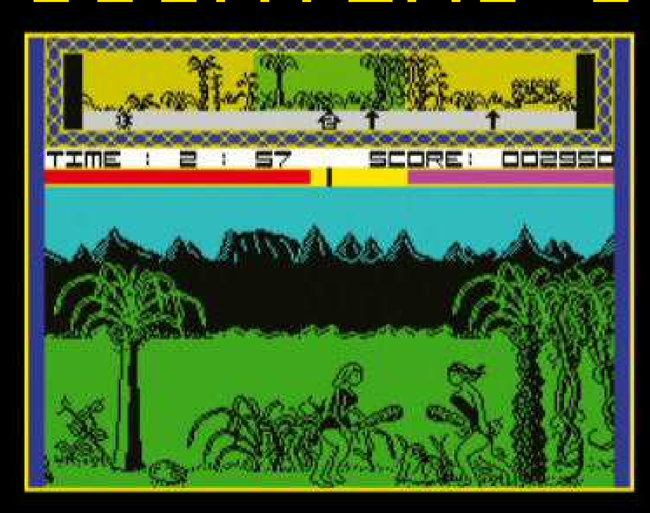
■ Although it looks like the Amiga version, the DOS *Stormlord* sounds like the Spectrum original. The DOS port replaces the original's flying through the night sky mechanic with being carried by an eagle across levels, which lets you assess the forthcoming challenges.

MEGA DRIVE



■ Just as the ST, Amiga and DOS *Stormlord* versions are an evolution of the Spectrum original, the Mega Drive adaptation is an enhanced version of the 16-bit iterations. As well as improved sound, this version adds four stages that combine elements of the existing fairy and castle levels.

COURTING CONTROVERSY



LEGEND OF THE AMAZON WOMEN

■ Besides having a cover depicting practically naked Amazons, US Gold's beat-'em-up was advertised for six months before its release. Complaints over delays and deformed nudes might have faded had the game been good, but *Amazon* suffers from decidedly dull gameplay.



GAME OVER

■ Inspired by *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, and every bit as hard, *Game Over* became better known for the partially exposed nipple on its cover. The controversy was soon nipped in the bud, however, as complaints over the game's initial magazine adverts resulted in subsequent advertisements and the box art for the UK release being censored.

▶ with their weapon choice they might find some sections less frustrating to complete."

As well as weapons and jumping – and the shoot-'em-up sections and platforming that these mechanics facilitated – Raffaele implemented a third gameplay strand in the form of cause-and-effect puzzles. "The puzzles fitted nicely with the fantasy 'quest' style of the game and the exploration that was required to complete the levels," the designer points out. "*Exolon* and *Cybernoid* were almost totally linear, although you did have to work out the safest way off each screen. So it was novel to drop the pace of the game a little and get players to think. I hadn't made a game before with proper puzzles, so it added interest to my work."

But despite the addition of puzzles to Raffaele's proven formula, his latest project still reflected his preference for arcade titles over arcade adventures. "*Stormlord* was fundamentally an action game, so I didn't want to go off-road too much. Also, action games were my own preference," Raffaele considers. "In most cases, the puzzles were merely variants of lock-and-key puzzles, a bit like the



» [ZX Spectrum] Often a choice is given in *Stormlord* to platform or blast your way through a section.

> "THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO SEE THAN YOU'D GET IN ANY RENAISSANCE PAINTING OR FANTASY ART"
> Raffaele Cecco

coloured pass-cards in *Equinox*. However, having a different graphical effect, like the bees flying towards the honey, made for a more satisfying experience when you solved the puzzle. I felt the simple puzzles punctuated the action nicely but without being too distracting."

A second punctuation of *Stormlord*'s action followed, as Raffaele introduced romantic bonus rounds between stages where his hero could gain lives by sending hearts to fairies and collecting their tears. "Ha! I really liked that little subgame," Raffaele says with a smile. "Maybe I was trying to show a softer side of the main character? I think it just fitted in nicely with the whole fairy theme. However, peel away the graphics of that sub-game and what do you have? It was really a simple shoot-'em-up where the 'bullets' were hearts, the 'aliens' were fairies and the 'pick-ups' they dropped when 'shot' were tears."

While Raffaele was adding *Stormlord*'s sweet shooter, and polishing the game's core levels, his publisher Hewson Consultants was conducting a blitz of prerelease marketing, but the magazine screenshots and cover tape demos that resulted from Hewson's publicity drive proved somewhat controversial. "I remember the naked fairies caused a few raised eyebrows," Raffaele acknowledges.



More 8-bit games that caused a stir



ATHENA

■ Considering how cute *Athena*'s in-game graphics are, its ironic that the coin-op conversion's front cover provoked such a heated debate. Besides concerns over the box art's near-naked Athena, Ocean Software also received a complaint that a section of the armour worn by the Minotaur on its cover looked like a giant phallus.



BARBARIAN

■ The decision to put a scantily clad Maria Whittaker on the front cover of *Barbarian* was a stroke of genius, as the ensuing furore completely overshadowed the game's graphic decapitations. Perhaps to avoid accusations of sexism, *Barbarian* also had a half-naked guy on its cover, but this did little to quell the controversy.



VIXEN

■ Following *Barbarian*'s successful marketing ploy, Martech Games followed suit by giving Vixen a cover featuring a barely dressed Corinne Russell. Despite impressive digitised animation, the game itself was bland, and after Boots refused to sell it, Martech released a version with just a headshot of Corinne on the cover.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

EXOLON
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

CYBERNOID
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1988

DELIVERANCE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1990



» [ZX Spectrum] Freeing *Stormlord*'s last fairy isn't difficult, but getting to her prison is a serious challenge.

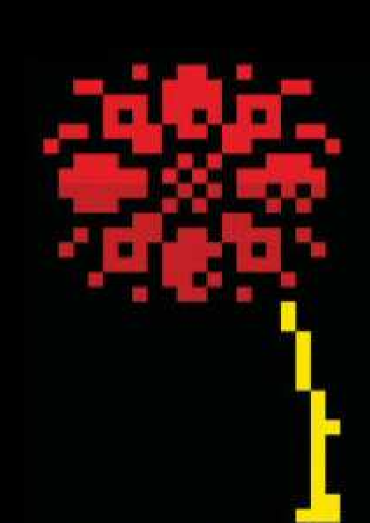
"But I don't know what all the fuss was about to be honest, as there was nothing more to see than you'd get in any Renaissance painting or other fantasy art. I thought it fitted in well with all the other graphics and there was nothing gratuitous about it. It certainly wasn't my intention to cause any kind of controversy or publicity because of it. Fun fact: I just couldn't draw the lower parts of the legs on the big fairies properly, so that's why they ended up stood in pots!"

Potted or otherwise, the fuss caused by Raffaele's naked fairies in the run up to *Stormlord*'s release didn't negatively affect the response to his game when it ultimately came out. "I remember that *Stormlord* reviewed very well, albeit without the impact of *Exolon* and *Cybernoid*," Raffaele recollects. "I was pleased, as the game was quite a diversion from my successful previous titles. I didn't know what the sales figures were like – remember that the game was released quite late in the ZX Spectrum's life. However, Hewson did release the game and/or licence the game for other platforms. I remember seeing some of the 16-bit versions and remarking how great the graphics looked. In many ways, the 16-bit versions manifested what I saw in my mind when I was developing the Spectrum version."



» [ZX Spectrum] A recurring challenge in *Stormlord* involves tempting bees away from somewhere with honey.

In reviewing his game decades after its release, Raffaele is satisfied that *Stormlord* couldn't have been improved much in the time allowed for its development and proud that it's rated just as highly as his earlier sci-fi titles. "I don't know what I could have changed within the time I had – ultimately, that was the limiting factor," Raffaele concedes. "With more time, I would have included more puzzles and different baddies, more levels, more graphics and so on. But I'm quite proud of *Stormlord*, as it was something different for me. There was certainly an element of risk in releasing such a game after the success of *Exolon* and *Cybernoid*, but it's great to see it listed alongside all the sci-fi titles. And with all the different platform versions that came out later, it's good to see a bit of a legacy there too." ★





Frogger

» DEVELOPER: Konami **» YEAR:** 1981 **» COST TODAY:** £300+

For a major arcade classic, *Frogger* certainly has a rather nondescript home. The cabinet's woodgrain sides might have come from any generic chip shop cabinet of the era, with only some machines being enlivened by the addition of a side art sticker. Even then, that side art is the same as the marquee art, depicting *Frogger* with a briefcase and a tie, dodging a car. The art on the control panel and screen bezel is thematically clever, incorporating tyre tracks underneath the marquee's tyre to hint at the potential fate of our athletic amphibian hero, but the grey road motif doesn't stand out much. Of course, the control panel itself doesn't exactly convey infinite possibilities either, given that it consists of a joystick and nothing else.

So it's up to the game itself to impress the player, and fortunately the game design is timeless. *Frogger* offers a simple task that any player can understand and easy controls, yet the actual act of pulling off a successful run to the top of the screen is a real challenge. All of the hazards are fair and patterns are easy to read, but the time limit ensures that overly cautious play is impossible. It's simple to learn and hard to master – and that's why people love it.



Frogger fact

■ *Frogger* was the subject of a 1998 episode of Seinfeld, *The Frogger*. George Costanza set a fictional high score of 860,630 in the episode, which wouldn't be beaten by a real player until Pat Laffaye scored 896,980 in 2009 – a new world record at the time.

STANDOUT MOMENT **Filling The Ranks**

Getting to the top of the screen in *Frogger* once is a challenge, but doing it successfully five times in a row is an altogether tougher proposition. This is especially true as *Frogger* must reach a different target spot each time, a devilish proposition when that happens to be at the extreme edges of the screen. There's a satisfying sense of tidiness imparted when filling those spots over the course of a game, soothing our inner need to pluck order from chaos. Plus, once you've done it once, you get to start all over again! Ace.

SYSTEM SUPPLIED BY **ARCADE CLUB**

LICENCE TO THRILL

NOW SHOWING: THE NEVERENDING STORY



FILM

» **YEAR:** 1984
» **DIRECTOR:** Wolfgang Petersen
» **STARRING:** Noah Hathaway, Barret Oliver, Tami Stronach
» **BUDGET:** $27 Million
» **BOX OFFICE:** $40 Million (estimated)

GAME

» **YEAR:** 1985
» **DEVELOPER:** Ocean
» **PUBLISHER:** Ocean, Datasoft
» **PLATFORMS:** Various

Michael Ende's bestselling book was adapted into a much-loved movie. Could Ocean's computer game continue the winning run?

Words by Martyn Carroll

Everyone remembers *The NeverEnding Story*, and not just because of the low-hanging, 'Look, it's false advertising!' quip. It's one of the most memorable fantasy films of the Eighties, mixing big-screen spectacle with dark-tinged drama and a generous helping of cheese.



» [Atari 8-bit] It wouldn't be a text adventure without a bloody great spider's web blocking your way.

Based on Michael Ende's novel, published in 1979, it tells the story of Bastion, a young boy who discovers the titular tome in an old bookshop. As he reads he begins to visualise the story, thereby bringing to life the magical world of Fantasia and its weird and wonderful inhabitants. But all is not well in Fantasia: it is being consumed by The Nothing, and only kid warrior Atreyu, coupled with Bastion's belief in what he's reading, can save it. The story-within-a-story scenario works well, but it's the visual design that lifts the film, mixing practical puppetry and miniature effects with matte paintings and blue screen work to create an dazzling fantasy world.

Directed by Wolfgang Petersen (*Das Boot*), the motion picture was a German-US coproduction which debuted in Germany in April 1984. It hit US cinemas in July that year and, as was the norm back then, opened in other countries over the next 18 months, eventually arriving in the UK in April 1985. This staggered release schedule was good news for Ocean software, who licenced the game (alongside multiple other movie and TV properties), as it afforded it time to develop the tie-in computer game while the film was still relevant.

The game was created by three ex-Imagine Software employees: coder Ian Weatherburn and graphic artists Steve Cain and Simon Butler. Simon reveals that he ended up working on the game quite by chance. "I went down to London and nothing worked out. My relationship



» [ZX Spectrum] Every so often we glimpse Bastion in the school attic, presumably reading his copy of **Retro Gamer**.

failed, my job failed. So I put my tail between my legs and ran back home to Liverpool. The first thing I did was contact Steve Cain who was my best mate in the whole world. I wasn't looking for a job, I just called round to see him. He was producing the graphics for the Commodore 64 version of *The NeverEnding Story* and he asked me if I'd like to do the graphics for the Spectrum and Amstrad versions."

This wasn't the first licenced game that Simon had been involved with. "I did *Transformers* on the C64 for Denton Designs," he reveals. "It was absolutely shocking, but it was Denton's most successful game ever. It sold bucket loads. No one really knew anything about licences back then. It was the early days in the industry and we were just trying stuff and seeing what worked."

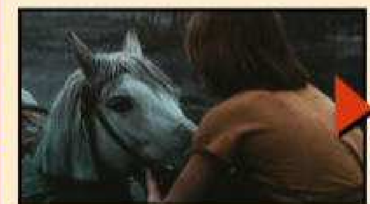
That said, the team knew what *wouldn't* work for *The NeverEnding Story* and that was a typical arcade adventure. This is why it opted to create a traditional text adventure with graphical elements (to depict characters, objects and key scenes within the story). "There was no other way to do it back then," says Simon. "Ian just wanted something that was 'doable'. I read the book and knew that the 8-bit machines couldn't do it justice, with a flying dragon section, a giant rock monster and so on. I know that didn't stop people from trying, but it just couldn't be done with any degree of resemblance to the film. So a text adventure with a few nice graphics slapped in was the right way to go. As for the story, there wasn't a lot we could do as we were required to follow the film script that we'd been provided with." One sensible change the team did make was to largely remove the surrounding real-world story and focus on the quest to save Fantasia. Player's took control of Atreyu and the objective was to ▶



» [Amstrad CPC] Hang around too long in the Swamp Of Sadness and you'll die from despair. That's life, we guess.

MOVIE TO GAME COMPARISON

How key scenes from the film appeared in Ocean's game




ARTAX IS SWAMPED

You'll certainly remember the sad scene in the film where Atreyu's trusty steed Artax sinks in the Swamp Of Sadness. That tragic event occurs in the game too, but you can avoid it by simply not taking Artex with you when you visit Morla the Ancient One in the swamp.



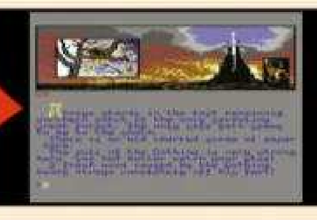

FALKOR TAKES FLIGHT

In the film, the Southern Oracle lies 10,000 miles away, while in the game it's just a short hop across a 'desert of many colours'. In both cases, it's Falkor the Luckdragon who flies Atreyu there. Player must summon Falkor by finding and blowing a 'gilt-covered hunting horn'.




SPHINX HIJINKS

In the movie Atreyu has to conjure up confidence to safely pass the stone sphinxes that guard the Southern Oracle. The scenario is mirrored in the game, but the solution is less abstract – you have to keep waiting until the sphinxes blink and then make a mad dash for it.

FANTASIA FRAGMENTS

As The Nothing consumes Fantasia and everything in it, Atreyu is very nearly pulled into the abyss. In both film and game, Falkor comes to the rescue just before Fantasia explodes into millions of pieces. He then takes Atreyu to The Ivory Tower which somehow still stands.




MEETING THE EMPRESS

The Childlike Empress is mentioned throughout, but Atreyu only gets to meet her at the end of his adventure, atop The Ivory Tower. Unlike the movie the game ends at this point, with Bastian, Atreyu and Falkor flying off on a quest "to begin rebuilding Fantasia".

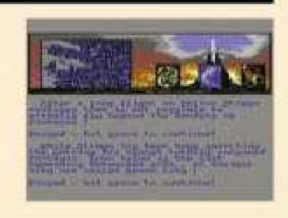




ARTISTIC LICENCE

Err… was that in the film?

SPOOK CITY



■ A large part of the game takes place in 'Spook City' where text adventure tropes lurk around every corner. Spook City was only featured in the film briefly and never named.

ATREYU EXPIRES



■ Our young hero doesn't die in the film, obviously, but in the game his life is forever in peril, particularly in part two where one wrong footstep sees him consumed by The Nothing.

MADDENING MAZES



■ No, the film didn't feature an hour-long scene where Atreyu gets helplessly stuck in "a twisty maze of corridors" on the way to meet the Empress. Thanks a bunch, Colossal Cave!



"The video arcade is down the street. Here we just sell small rectangular objects. They're called books"

Koreander

» Ocean's Simon Butler illustrated the Spectrum and Amstrad versions.

deliver the medallion Auryn to the Empress who resided at the top of The Ivory Tower, overcoming various challenges along the way.

It's fair to say that Simon faced his own challenges when working on the game. "I started working with Ian and he was a nightmare to work with. He really was dysfunctional. He was one of the founders of Denton Designs but he fell out with the other guys on the very first day, so he went to Ocean and presented himself as a coder for hire. And I assume Ocean's David Ward said, 'We've got this licence for this big movie called *The NeverEnding Story*.' As a coder Ian was excellent. There was no bad blood between us, he just had no social skills whatsoever. Ocean knew he was good and they gave him a fairly free rein."

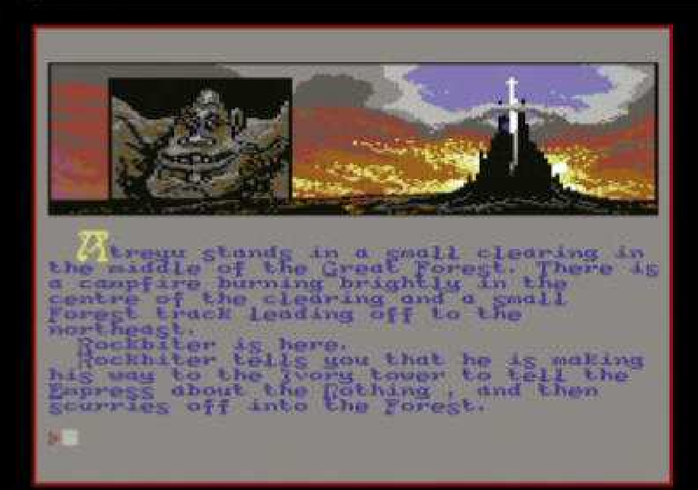
Simon also enjoyed some freedom which allowed him to create the graphics at home. "I was living with my parents at the time and I remember working in the front room and having a Commodore 64 loaded up with Steve's graphics," he remembers. "I was blown away by all of them. I'd call up each graphic one-by-one and recreate it on the Spectrum. I remember doing Atreyu, Engywook, the Empress, Falkor the Luckdragon, who looked like a cross between a hamster and a caterpillar. This was my very first Spectrum game and I tried my damndest to copy Steve's graphics the best I could. I'd previously done the Dragon version of Pedro for Imagine and here I could use more than three colours. Eight colours! I was in paradise, living the dream."

Although the adventure didn't feature a massive number of locations, and the text parser was fairly simple, the graphics used up a lot of memory. Each version also included a rendition of the Giorgio Moroder's theme tune. These additions swelled the file



» [C64] Gmork the werewolf does appear in the game, although he is rather toothless.

NOTABLE VERSIONS



COMMODORE 64

■ The lead version is the best version, thanks to first-rate presentation throughout. Steve Cain's original graphics are great and the title screen features a fantastic version of the theme tune composed by Martin Galway.



ZX SPECTRUM

■ A fine conversion, brought to life by Simon Butler's graphics. The original 48K release was later superseded by a 128K version which loaded all three parts in one go and played an AY version of the theme as you ventured.



AMSTRAD CPC

■ Similar to the Speccy version, though with more colourful graphics (the display section at the top of the screen uses the CPC's 16-colour Mode 0). However the text scroll speed is quite sluggish, affecting how the game plays.

size to more than 100KB, resulting in the game being split into three parts which loaded separately – a decision which was welcomed by some reviewers at the time. "This 100KB blockbuster loads in three parts from cassette," wrote the White Wizard in *Zzap!64*'s December 1985 issue. "It's an excellent example of the new breed of graphic adventures where someone's really taken care over the design of the pictures so that they properly compliment the game and aren't just there for decoration." However the limitations of the parser – in particular the curious absence of the 'Examine' command – resulted in the final score dropping to 65%.

Sister mag *Crash* gave the Spectrum version 7/10, while *Your Sinclair* awarded it 'Mega-Game' status and a 9/10 score. On the other hand *C&VG*'s Keith Campbell was not a fan, awarding 4/10 to all versions and calling it "a passable adventure". In addition to the C64 and Spectrum, the game was released for the Amstrad CPC, Atari XL/XE and Apple II, with Datasoft publishing the game outside Europe. An enhanced, single-load version was also created for the new Spectrum 128 and bundled with the machine when it launched.

Simon himself was pleased with how the game turned out, certainly compared to some of the other licenced efforts he worked on. "Ian and Steve set up Canvas and that's where we ended up doing a horrendous selection of increasingly shite games. They didn't care how low they set the bar. Compared to the likes of *Miami Vice* and *Highlander, The NeverEnding Story* really worked. It worked a treat."



» [ZX Spectrum] The loading screen for the game features a number of characters from the film.

Following the game's release, Ian and Simon reteamed for further licensed adventures. "We did *Hunchback The Adventure* basically because Ian wanted to reuse the system he had developed and obviously Ocean owned the *Hunchback* licence," he says. "We then milked it some more with *Batman The Adventure*, which was finished but never released. I clearly remember doing a graphic of the Batmobile skidding around a corner, and Ian wanted all these zoom lines and dust and stuff on it. I remember sweating bullets over that and Ian was really pleased with how it turned out. The rest of it is all a bit of a blur. I know that Ian took it to Ocean and they basically said no. That was a shame, but then I wasn't on royalties so at least I got paid."



» [ZX Spectrum] A torture chamber with blood splashed on the wall? Pretty sure that wasn't in the U-rated film.

Basing a text adventure on a big movie property was a bold move for Ocean, but as Simon says, it was the right decision at the time. If you're not convinced just take a look at the game by Linel based on the 1990 movie sequel *The NeverEnding Story II*. This followed the usual movie tie-in approach with various arcade minigames (including an Artax horse-jumping scene and, yes, a 3D Falkor flying section) and the end result was as average as the movie on which it was based. Both titles later went head-to-head in a round-up of movie licences in the November 1992 issue of *Zzap!64* where they scored 64% and 48% respectively. It was no surprise to see the nondescript second game being outshone by the inventive original.





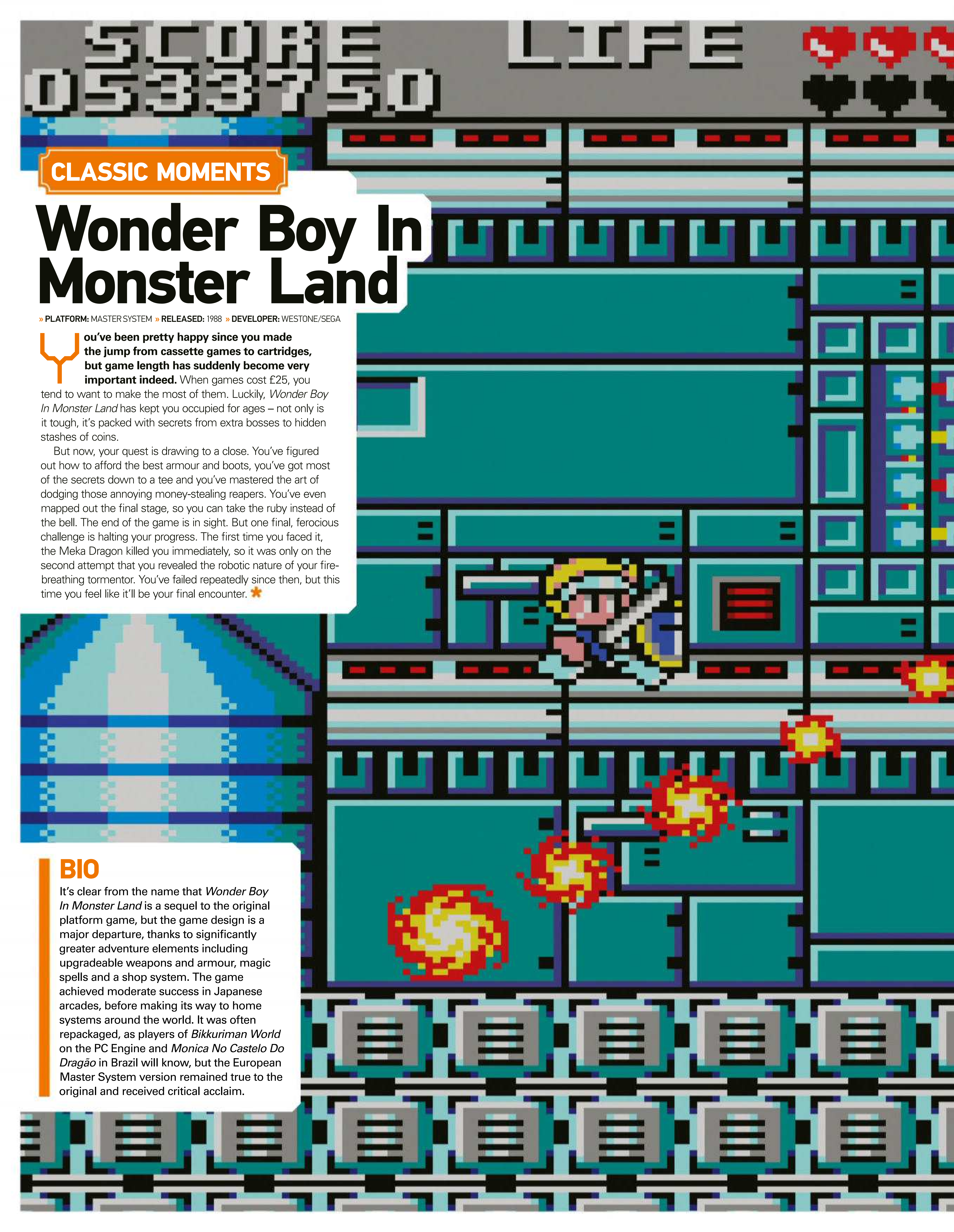
ATARI XL/XE

■ This is a straight port of the C64 version that requires a 64K machine to run. The rendition of the theme music, which plays in-game, is pretty awful though. Thankfully there's a command to turn the damn thing off.



APPLE II

■ Like the Atari version, this is a conversion of the C64 game. The graphics are loud and low-res, as you'd expect on the Apple II, and we won't even mention the music, but the game itself plays as well as the original.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Wonder Boy In Monster Land

» **PLATFORM:** MASTER SYSTEM » **RELEASED:** 1988 » **DEVELOPER:** WESTONE/SEGA

You've been pretty happy since you made the jump from cassette games to cartridges, but game length has suddenly become very important indeed. When games cost £25, you tend to want to make the most of them. Luckily, *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* has kept you occupied for ages – not only is it tough, it's packed with secrets from extra bosses to hidden stashes of coins.

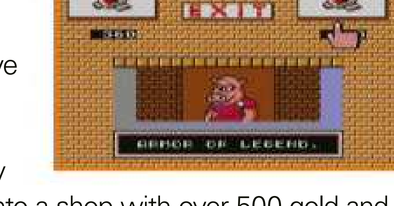
But now, your quest is drawing to a close. You've figured out how to afford the best armour and boots, you've got most of the secrets down to a tee and you've mastered the art of dodging those annoying money-stealing reapers. You've even mapped out the final stage, so you can take the ruby instead of the bell. The end of the game is in sight. But one final, ferocious challenge is halting your progress. The first time you faced it, the Meka Dragon killed you immediately, so it was only on the second attempt that you revealed the robotic nature of your fire-breathing tormentor. You've failed repeatedly since then, but this time you feel like it'll be your final encounter. *

BIO

It's clear from the name that *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* is a sequel to the original platform game, but the game design is a major departure, thanks to significantly greater adventure elements including upgradeable weapons and armour, magic spells and a shop system. The game achieved moderate success in Japanese arcades, before making its way to home systems around the world. It was often repackaged, as players of *Bikkuriman World* on the PC Engine and *Monica No Castelo Do Dragão* in Brazil will know, but the European Master System version remained true to the original and received critical acclaim.

MORE WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND MOMENTS

Hey Big Spender



Wonder Boy In Monster Land has a number of interesting shopkeepers, from birds to lizard-people, and they all have some interesting things to sell. That's great, of course, but what makes us feel really good is when we can walk into a shop with over 500 gold and buy the most expensive item in it.

More Than Meets The Eye



As mentioned in the main moment, there are many secrets to be found in *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*. It's worth pressing up in the strangest of places, just to see if our hero starts knocking on an invisible door. Just be prepared for the consequences – you could easily walk into a boss battle on the other side.

Music To Your Ears



When you pick up the flute in the fourth stage, it's not entirely obvious what to do with it, but you get a pretty good idea when the last part of the seventh stage shows you an oddly expansive sea. Get out to the ladder and climb to the top to play your tune, and you'll reveal the Mystery Mansion offscreen to the right.

They Sphinx They're Clever



Sphinxes happen to love riddles, and this boss battle plays on that perfectly. If you guess the answer correctly (or buy the information in local taverns), the boss battle ends immediately. If you get it wrong, you'd best be prepared for a fight – the sphinx will launch a fireball straight at you as soon as it finishes talking.

THE MAKING OF

SKYD

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI INC

» **DEVELOPER:** OWEN RUBIN

» **RELEASED:** 1978

» **GENRE:** EXTREME SPORTS

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ORBIT
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1978

SPACE DUEL
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1982

MAJOR HAVOC
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983



» Owen Rubin worked on a number of classic Atari games including *Major Havoc* and *Battlezone*.

Let's jump back to a time when Atari were flying high in the arcade business and encouraged blue-sky thinking. Game designer and coder Owen Rubin freefalls into the late Seventies

Words by Paul Drury

We've all heard of the type of acting, where an actor draws on their own life experience to bring an emotional authenticity to their performance, but 'method coding' is a new one on us.

"I had this idea for *Skydiver*," recalls programmer Owen Rubin, "and a bunch of guys at work said, 'Well, we skydive, so we'll take you up'. Thing is, I'm terrified of heights! When I was up there, I chickened out. I said there was no way I was jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. So the pilot cut the engine. That was his obnoxious sense of humour."

It wasn't the first time Owen and Atari, the company he'd joined in June 1976, had turned an extreme sport into an arcade title. His first game had featured a hapless human cannonball being blasted through a worryingly small hole in a wall and of course motorbiking mentalist Evel Knievel was riding high in the Seventies. "We'd done well with *Stunt Cycle* and *Cannonball* had followed on from that," he grins. "I wanted *Skydiver* to continue that theme of the daredevil!"

The concept was simple. Players must leap from a plane cruising across the top of the screen, deploy their parachute and land successfully on a small pad of the correct colour at the bottom. Three misses and you're out. Easy to learn but difficult to master, due to the addition of various complicating factors. Your score increases the longer you allow your plucky parachutist to freefall but the landing spot shrinks accordingly, a classic risk-versus-reward mechanic. The higher you score, the lower the plane flies, giving you less reaction time, plus you must jump before your craft leaves the screen or lose a life. And if deciding exactly when to take the plunge wasn't stressful enough, you have the weather to consider, too. "I needed something to make it harder, so you didn't just move yourself left and right to land," explains Owen, "so I added in the wind factor but in hindsight, it changes way too fast. I should have skewed the wind to another direction, not just suddenly change it. It meant the winds always seem extreme. That windsock is always up! The kickback is you only need to get one toe in. We experimented with you having to getting two feet on the landing pad and it was just impossible, so we decided as long as you touch it, you're in."

Though the game is still a deceptively tough challenge, especially when an unexpected gust of wind suddenly sends you off target during the final moments of your dive, there is a wonderful sense of achievement when you just manage to squeeze your big toe onto the pad and your skydiver punches the air in delight. Considering the technical limitations of the hardware, your protagonist has real character. He tugs frantically at his chute strings to direct his descent and if you fail to open your parachute in time, he faceplants the ground, his legs kicking



» [Arcade] Checking the wind direction before you jump is crucial for a successful landing



» The idea for the controls was to recreate a parachute, as these design sketches from the Atari archives reveal.

IVER


» The arcade cab features two ripcords – you can find this one at Funspot in New Hampshire.

in the air, accompanied by a sickening thud. "We couldn't kill the guy, so an ambulance comes and picks him up," smiles Owen. "I created that sound effect by throwing wet paper towels on a tiled floor and recorded it on a storage scope, then used that wave form and replicated it on a white noise generator. It created a very pleasant crunching sound. I'd originally created it for *Cannonball* but the management said it was too disgusting so for *Skydiver*, the idea was to have him jumping over water and there would be a 'splash' but during review, one of my managers said, 'Hey, do you still have that splat sound? If you do it comically, maybe it's okay.'"

The impressive animation came at a cost, though. Owen had to implement a very early example of sprite multiplexing, meaning the chute and the parachutist are displayed on alternate frames, which explains the flicker. He also gave a nod to his love of pinball by getting engineer Paul Mancuso to modify the hardware so each letter of the game's title on the marquee of the cabinet lights up in turn. When you leap, that letter flashes and if you land successfully, it stays lit. Light up the whole word and you get a bonus. It's one of many innovative touches, the most impressive being the unique control system, which has an actual ripcord you yank to release your chute.

"We had this wonderful industrial design group at Atari and guys like Jerry Lichac could make control systems for you," remembers Owen. "You can tip that game over with those ripcords! They're heavy steel, welded, and you can even steer with them. It's amazing how they've survived for 40 years."



» [Arcade] The longer you free fall, the higher your score, but the landing spot gets smaller, too.

Four decades on and *Skydiver* is still great fun to play, especially with its simultaneous two-player mode, though its release just as Taito's iconic *Space Invaders* was taking over the world meant it only had a limited production run. "My games tend to be more popular later rather than when they first came out," chuckles Owen. "A lot more people are interested in *Major Havoc* and *Space Duel* now than back then. And I love to put wise guy stuff in my games, little Easter eggs, like in *Major Havoc* having the animation of him tapping his foot when you don't move. *Skydiver* was where that all started."

HOME LANDING

***Skydiver* on the Atari 2600, released in 1979, was coded by Jim Huether and when we interviewed him in RG 159 Jim recalled starting work on it before he saw Owen's game, though is the first to admit he smoked his share of 'laughing grass' at the time and in the intervening years. "I'm sure I started it way before he did," mulls Owen, "but I spent a lot of time going between coin-op and the consumer group, inviting them to come and play ours. It's possible he saw what I was working on and then did his own version, rather than copying it once it was released." The home version is worth a play, especially the two-player mode, which has you fighting over a single landing pad.**




DECK GUN
LIGHT BOMBER
BIPLANE
AUTO
■ An automated and more powerful version of the default gun, this is particularly advantageous against enemy ships.
SAKICHI
■ A rare bonus star that rewards 5,000 points and completely fills up the weapon usage timer.
THREE-WAY
■ A valuable weapon against the lesser-powered enemies that frequently mass in front of the player.
SUPER ACE

ULTIMATE GUIDE:

1943

THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

After wowing arcadegoers with the World War 2-themed 1942 it was inevitable that Capcom would want to build upon the shooter's success with a brand-new sequel. The end result was another frenetic blaster that hit very close to home…

Words by Graeme Mason

Back in issue 144 of Retro Gamer we celebrated *1942*, the groundbreaking military-style shoot-'em-up that shattered the mould of the genre into a thousand bullet-riddled pieces. No longer was it aliens or monsters you were eliminating; instead, World War 2-themed aircraft descended on the player, spewing hot lead at the Super Ace fighter.

Three years later, Capcom continued on the new heading, this time based on a real-life wartime event, although *The Battle Of Midway* actually took place in early June 1942, six months after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. With a handful of American aircraft carriers out on manoeuvres during the infamous ambush, the Japanese forces planned to destroy these remaining ships and almost completely knock the United States from the war, barely moments after its involvement had begun. The fleets met at Midway Island, or rather the Midway Atoll, a collection of small islands, less than three square miles in size, but of vital strategic importance thanks to its equidistance between America and Japan. The American target was the lead battleship Yamato, pride of the Japanese fleet and commanded by fleet admiral Isoroku Yamamoto.

But that's enough of the history lesson. *1943* the videogame is once more about you and that P38 Lightning, battling a mass of enemy planes and ships. As with *1942*, the game starts with takeoff from an aircraft carrier (itself under attack), and vertically scrolls into the heat of 20th century warfare with just a puny twin-shot gun. Fortunately, valuable power-ups are helpfully dropped whenever a phalanx of crimson planes is eliminated by the player. Enemies consist of a variety of aircraft, such as jets, small and medium bombers and standard fighter planes. At the end of each level lies either a main enemy vessel (a battleship or aircraft carrier) or a huge heavy bomber. These are your key targets, and a certain percentage of them ▶

» [Arcade] The wingmen in *1943* are rare and tricky to acquire, but worth the effort.

PLAYING TIPS How to survive the airborne onslaught



SHIP ATTACK

■ Many of the levels involve an attack on the enemy fleet, and here power-ups and guns are vital. Weapons that fire to the side are most useful as they mean you can continually fire while dodging the ship's deck cannons, and the standard three-way is too weak.

PLANE CRAZY

■ Punctuating the end-of-level fleets, these massive planes can be even trickier to take down. It's always worth considering using a few smart bomb attacks, and making sure you time your attacks in between the aircraft's devastating fire.





STAY LOW...BUT NOT TOO LOW

■ It can be very tempting to get your ass up the screen when there's a juicy power-up or bonus item lurking. Keeping in the bottom third and playing the waiting game is much more beneficial in the long run.

THEY CAME FROM BEHIND

■ Of course, you don't want to be anchored to the bottom of the screen, either. By level three, enemies regularly start appearing from behind the player, and while they don't often fire, a collision will reduce just as much energy.



must be destroyed, or the mission is a failure and must be replayed.

While its predecessor may win nostalgia bragging rights, *1943* ups the stakes considerably, introducing new tactics into the game design that puts it several kilometres above *1942*, not to mention a total absence of that infuriating whistle sound effect. Power-ups can now be shot in order to change and enable the player to select the desired weapon or energy boost, and a tidal wave/lightning smart bomb – which consumes a segment of the player's power – is another powerful weapon that helps tilt the conflict in American favour.

16 fields of battle await the lonely P38 Lightning, with 11 of them containing an air-to-sea target, the other five an aerial battle. These are the true test of a pilot's skill, as battleships and aircraft carriers spit bullets from their armoured turrets, supported by swarms of enemy fighters, and pure evasion is not an option here. Each weapon power-up lasts for a certain time as indicated by a counter at the bottom of the screen. This can be 'topped up' by picking up the same weapon icon, and these can be tactically chosen throughout each level. The trusty triple shot is imperative against the throng of small enemy fighters, but you might as well use a peashooter against the larger enemies. Swapping it out to stronger and more focused armaments at the right time is the key to defeating the mighty Japanese fleet. Additionally, *1943* contains a simultaneous two-player mode (in *1942*, players took turns), and the power bar system is a huge improvement over its predecessor's one-hit-dead mechanic. This can even be used tactically when in a jam, taking a collision hit to extricate the P38 from a tight spot and potential higher damage.

> **"I loved both 1943 and 1942, vertical shoot-'em-ups were a favourite of mine"**
> Alan Grier

As with *1942*, *1943* was an odd choice of subject and enemies considering its Japanese roots, and the use of a real-life combat zone only serves to heighten this awkwardness. Perhaps as a result, Capcom released *1943 Kai: Midway Kaisen* (known as *Battle Of Midway Mark II* in the USA) later the same year, and while the setting remains the same, there are a considerable number of changes that present an alternate history, somewhat removed from the original game. It's shorter, containing ten levels instead of the original's 16, and graphics have been dramatically altered, with the player now controlling a Boeing Stearman E75 biplane, and facing off against a range of similar aircraft. Recognisable as a common crop-duster plane of recent times, in World War 2, the Stearman was primarily used as a training aircraft; in *1943 Kai*, however, it's firmly thrust into the hot Pacific combat



» [Arcade] Taking down the bomber boss resulted in another striking graphic screen.

» [Arcade] The air-to-air smart attack is this impressive-looking lightning strike.





POWER-UP PLANNING

■ Tactical use of power-ups is vital in *1943*. Not only do they all have a short life, some can be changed by shooting them prior to pick up. Easier said than done in the heat of battle, but something that can swing the conflict your way.

POWER-UP PLANNING (PART 2)

■ Each power-up lasts for a limited time, indicated by a timer on the screen. Keep an eye on this in order to pick up the next power-up and also know when you're suddenly going to revert to the weedy base shot.





TIDAL WAVE USAGE

■ As it absorbs energy, use of the tidal wave needs to be managed. Tactical use of power-ups is fundamental here; ensuring a healthy power level prior to a boss battle increases the amount of tidal waves you can use, and the lost energy is replenished for the next level.

WATCHING THE MEDIUM BOMBERS

■ These bombers rise from the clouds below and are dangerous foes if left unchecked. But they've got a devious habit of dropping height to avoid your fire, meaning you have to keep an eye on their altitude to avoid wasting shots.



ENERGY TANK

■ Shoot a power-up enough times and it changes into this energy tank. Pick it up and a 24-point power boost is all yours.

BOMBER

SHOTGUN

■ Slow-firing, but with a wide spread, this is especially helpful in that it also destroys enemy gunfire.

YASHICHI

■ This symbol appears more often in the later levels after the player shoots a squadron of jet fighters, and completely restores the player's health bar.

JET FIGHTER

TAKING TO 16-BIT SKIES

We chat to Alan Grier, part of the team behind the 16-bit ports of 1943



How did you come to work on *1943*?
I was part of a small Glasgow-based development team called ICE Software, which was headed up by Ian Morrison. ICE were subcontracted by Probe to produce a variety of arcade conversions. *1943* was the first licence that Probe assigned to us, thankfully we didn't screw it up and they happily gave us more titles to convert.

Had you played the arcade game?
Oh yes, I was never far from the arcades growing up and because I worked in the games industry, I called it 'research'! I loved both *1943* and *1942* – vertical shoot-'em-ups were a particular favourite of mine.

Did you have any previous conversion experience, and did you have a *1943* arcade machine?
I believe it was my first arcade conversion, although I subsequently moved on to *Tiger Road*, *Chase HQ 2*, *Turbo OutRun* and *Roadblasters*. We had an arcade cabinet in the office, and after setting it to infinite lives and infinite continues, we would set up a tripod to record video and take countless photographs.

Did you do the graphics on both the Amiga and Atari ST?
I did, unfortunately. The Amiga versions did tend to be Atari ST ports. I like to tell myself it was because my Atari ST graphics were so awesome, but the reality was more like punishing publisher deadlines, very tight budgets and a general 'get this out and on the shelves as fast as possible' environment.

What was with the 'wiggly' line background?
I've no idea where that crept in from. It wasn't on the ocean tile that I supplied.

Is there anything you had to adapt or remove from the arcade game?
I may be wrong, but as far as I can remember I think we managed to squeeze in pretty much the entire game, albeit with a lot of compromise. I hated the massive side panel, for example, although I'm sure there must have been a good reason for it at the time. I would have loved for the game to have been fullscreen, but it was not to be, and similar issues came up on *Tiger Road* when I had to create a massive border around the smaller game window. It wasn't all fun and games.

It's not renowned as one of the better 16-bit arcade conversions.
I thought it was pretty awesome at the time, we were happy, and more importantly, the publishers were happy. But yeah, looking back now with 20-20 hindsight, maybe not the best conversion, we live and learn.

SMALL BOMBER

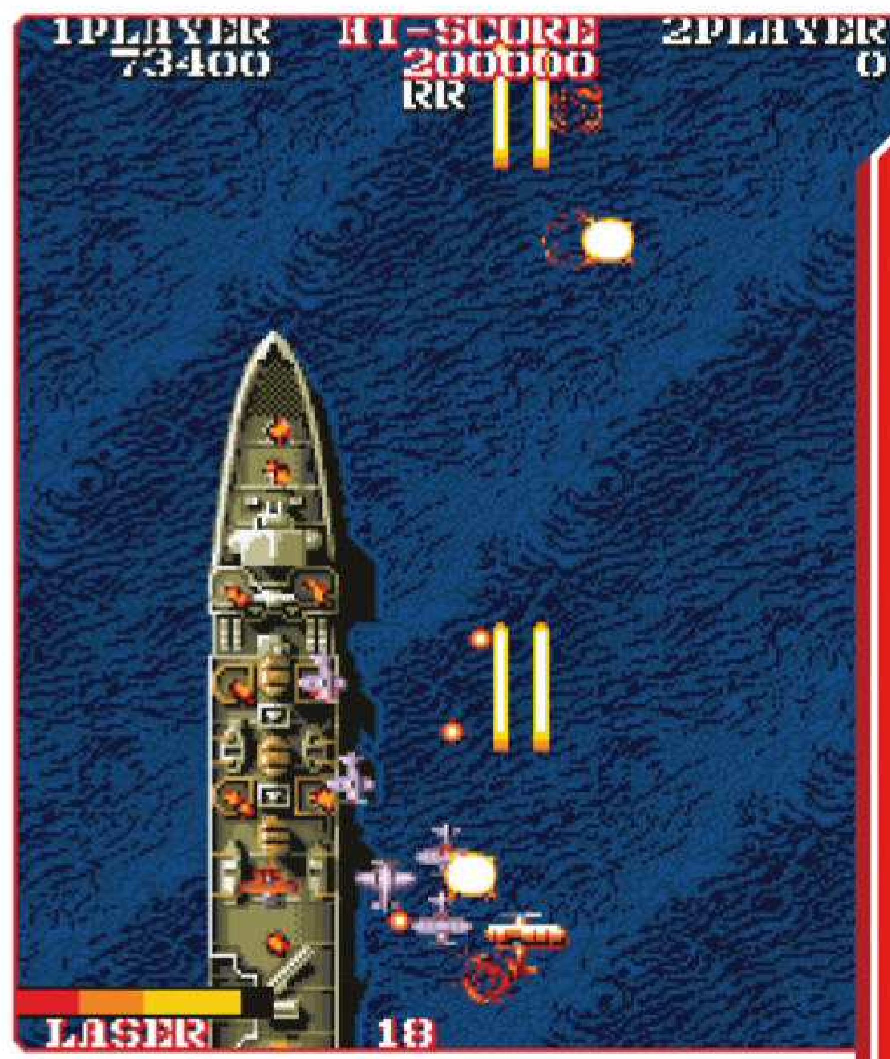
LASERS
■ This anachronistic energy weapon predictably has a devastating effect on enemy fighters, and is one to always aim for in *1943 Kai*.

WINGMEN
■ These brave chaps escort the P38, greatly increasing its firepower, but also making it a bigger target. They're most effective with *1943 Kai*'s laser.

SHELL
■ A powerful missile that is especially useful against boss targets, such as the massive end-of-level bomber.

PLAYER 2

POWER
■ Helpfully grants the player a bonus bit of fuel/energy and is frequently dropped by the red planes.



» [Arcade] *1943 Kai*'s lasers: anachronous, sure, but mighty useful nonetheless

zone, but fortunately the power-ups from *1943* remain, with a couple of neat additions. Replacing the autogun is a potent laser, and like all the weapons in *Kai*, this can be powered up by picking up a second relevant weapon icon. Along with a screen-sweeping 'O' shot gun and more frequent wingmen icons, these new destructive capabilities are precious considering *1943 Kai* throws a perverse number of enemies at the player, creating a World War II bullet hell that even the most experienced of gamers will struggle to master. Yet the over-the-top weaponry, bizarre backdrops (is that orange supposed to be sunset?) and an all-new, more varied soundtrack, make this a complementary experience to *1943*, and a true test for would-be World War 2 heroes.

With the 8-bit computers on the wane by 1988, and the 16-bits still finding their feet, the home conversions of *1943* have a rushed and pressurised feel to them. Handled by US Gold's sublabel, GO! and developers Tiertex and Probe, the quality is wildly variable on the 8-bits, with an average Spectrum port bracketed by a decent (but shallow) Amstrad port and a substandard Commodore 64 version. And there's an interesting footnote in the game *'43: One Year After*, a Commodore 64 title heavily 'inspired' by *1942*, and released on the computer a year before *1943*'s official conversion. Produced by Swedish company American Action, it's unconnected officially to the series, and a fairly lamentable effort regardless. *1943 Kai* received just one home port, for the PC Engine, and this was released solely in Japan. But perhaps the most telling indictment of *1943*'s popularity is its ubiquity since the Nineties. There was to be plenty more action in the *1942* series itself, not least prequel *1941: Counter Attack*, released three years later. But as an integral part of many Capcom compilations (including the *Capcom Generations* and *Classics Collection*), *1943* continues to delight gamers to this day with its fast-paced tactical shooting gameplay, forged in the Pacific Ocean, and refined at the headquarters of one of the most famous videogame companies in the world. May you fight bravely! *

CONVERSION CAPERS



AMIGA

■ A relatively simple conversion goes awry despite the best efforts of a pressured team, and as a port of the ST game, this Amiga version is disappointing. It's had the fun sucked out of it thanks to slow movement and an awful base weapon.



NES

■ There are a few tweaks to the original. The game distances itself from its real-life battle, replacing Midway with the fictional Valhalla Island. There's also a neat section that lets you improve different aspects of your plane.



AMSTRAD CPC

■ In our opinion, the best of the 8-bit conversions. Movement is still not as speedy as we'd like, and there's a squashed display, but much of the original's feel is retained. It's abrupt however, and after two levels, it all starts to feel a bit familiar.

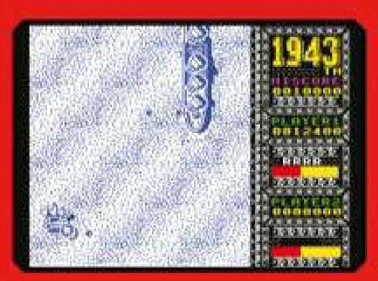


PC ENGINE

■ Not only does this PC Engine version of *1943 Kai* play smoothly, it also adds some extra levels and intros. The game radically alters halfway through, bringing in new firepower, music and enemies. The best home port by far.

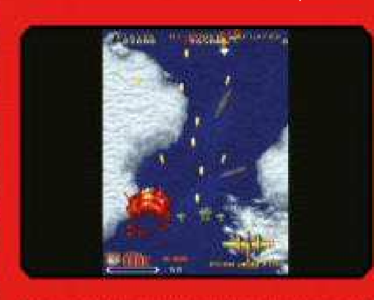
ZX SPECTRUM

■ *1943* was unfortunate to be released just after a superior competitor, Firebird's *Flying Shark*. It's still a decent conversion, with the P38 moving nicely across the screen and it's easier than the original. Bland visuals don't help it, though.



PSP

■ This was included as part of the scaled-down PSP compilation, *Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded* that lets you play *1942*, *1943* and *1943 Kai* on the go. Games can be saved in-progress, and there are unlockable cheats and extras, too.



XBOX 360/PS3

■ Capcom's *Arcade Cabinet* was a compilation for the Xbox 360 and PS3, with the first pack containing *1943*, along with *Black Tiger* and *Avengers*. *1943 Kai* featured as a bonus game if you bought the complete set.



PLAYSTATION/ SATURN

■ *Capcom Generations* contains a slab of the arcade giant's history and *1942*, *1943* and *1943 Kai* are housed in *Part 1: Wings Of Destiny*. Emulation is spot-on but there's little in the way of extras.





C64

■ Tiertex failed to cover itself with much glory with another limp C64 conversion. Chiefly ignoring the computer's strengths, the player's aircraft moves slowly and the levels are massively truncated, resulting in a short and underwhelming game.



XBOX/PS2

■ Another retro compilation, *Capcom Classics Collection* contains a range of games that lives up to that moniker. Along with *1942*, there's *1943* and *1943 Kai*, and they're all spot-on duplicates of the original arcade shoot-'em-ups.



ATARI ST

■ This arcade game should have proven simple to convert to the Atari 16-bit computer. Alas, the absence of a two-player option, boring-looking graphics and awkward control of the P38 means it's stuck on the runway.





FIFA Soccer 95

IT'S COMING HOME (JUST NOT SOON)

» RETROREVIVAL

» MEGA DRIVE » 1994 » ELECTRONIC ARTS

Apart from videogames, football is probably the biggest interest I share with my dad. I took him to Wembley in 2013 to see England beat Brazil, and we've spent countless hours watching non-league football on drizzly Saturday afternoons, travelling to glamorous clubs such as Braintree, Wealdstone and Northwood. And, as a son of two families cast out of London into the new towns, he's a Spurs fan – so naturally, so am I. Growing up as a Spurs fan in the mid-Nineties was trying, even more so than usual. When even the deadly striking partnership of Jürgen Klinsmann and Teddy Sheringham can't hoist the club into European competition, you know things are pretty bad.

Thankfully, Electronic Arts came through and made things a little bit better for young me. I loved playing *FIFA International Soccer* with my dad, though I'd rarely ever beat him, and *FIFA 95* was a big deal – as well as improvements on the pitch, the game added club teams for the first time. It didn't matter that I was playing with H Chapman and D Knox up front, so long as I could guide Tottenham to the top of the league. It was a struggle, because the team hasn't got the best stats thanks to a 15th place finish in the 1994 season, but I eventually managed to get the team there and lift the trophy. Good job, too, because despite coming close recently they've still not done it in my lifetime – or even my dad's. *

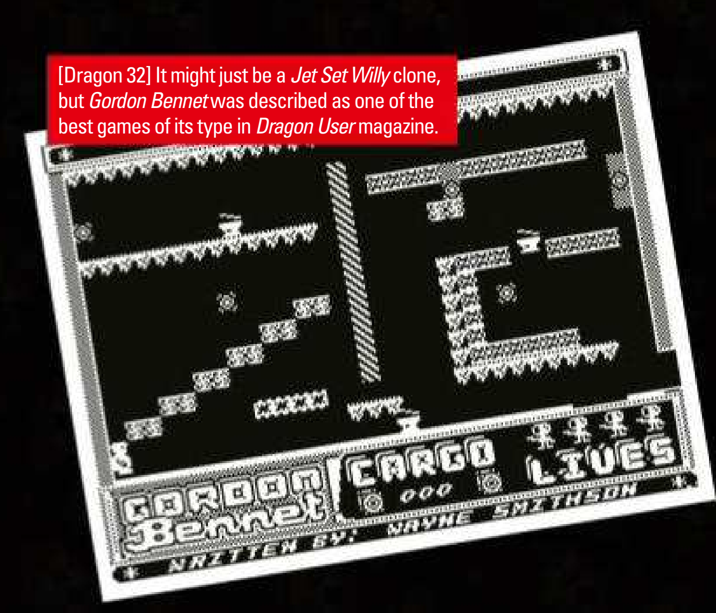




WJS Design

Starting your own games company at age 15 was something that many of us dreamt of, but pretty much nobody fulfilled. But Wayne Smithson did just that, as the WJS Design story tells us

Words by Kieren Hawken



[Dragon 32] It might just be a *Jet Set Willy* clone, but *Gordon Bennet* was described as one of the best games of its type in *Dragon User* magazine.

Like many stories surrounding videogames in the Eighties, WJS Design started with one teenager in their bedroom and the wonders of a home computer. The company's founder, Wayne Smithson, remembers his first encounters with this exciting new world very well. "The first time I ever saw a computer was when I was still at school, I was about 15 years old. A friend of mine brought in a Sinclair ZX81, typed in some lines of code and made a very rudimentary *Space Invaders* game. I was fascinated by it, and bought the ZX81 off him then started to learn BASIC myself, copying programs out of magazines and trying to figure out how they worked. Then a while later, but still at school, I managed to save enough cash to buy a Dragon 32, which I again used to learn BASIC, but properly this time. A month or two later again and I heard about this book on 6809 machine code so I bought a copy and began to learn. It was when I started to read that book that I really became hooked on programming and I found it very interesting, too. I then began to write games for the Dragon in assembler and that was the start of everything."

Wayne decided to call himself 'WJS Computing' to sound more professional, and this moniker was displayed loud and proud on the opening screen of all his Dragon 32 games. It turned out that he had a knack for creating games, too, as his very first title, a *Jet Set Willy* clone called *Gordon Bennet* that was published by Quickbeam, was reviewed in issue 44 of *Dragon User* magazine receiving an extremely credible four out of five.

After publishing several Dragon 32 games via Quickbeam, Wayne knew that this market was dying and he'd need to move on and adapt if he was going to really make it in the industry. Wayne recalls the need to progress. "The sales weren't very high for my Dragon 32 games, but it was more of a hobby at that stage," he says. "So I got myself an Atari ST, moved onto 68000 machine code and wrote a game called *Skyrider*. I can't remember exactly how, but that game was picked up by a small publisher and with it we attended a trade show in London – it was there that I bumped into the guys at Psygnosis."

This meeting with the legendary developer, which really made its name during the 16-bit era, was not forgotten and when Wayne came to developing his next game it the first company on his mind. "When I finished *Skyrider*, I had started work on another game, which was then unnamed but later came to be called *Baal*. It was just a demo at that point, but Psygnosis really liked it and signed me up straight away. I had previously been a one-man band but now I knew that I needed to expand and get an office, like I had seen others doing. Psygnosis gave me more



> "It was all Psygnosis in the early years but later we got to work with people like Thalamus, Ocean, Microprose, Team17 and even Atari. I never really found it difficult getting work, the main problem I always faced was cash flow"
> Wayne Smithson

work and the newly renamed WJS Design was born." This new relationship would prove to be extremely beneficial to WJS as the company submitted new original games to Psygnosis for both the Atari ST and Amiga as well being handed conversion duties for the Atari ST and Sega Mega Drive versions of several big name titles such as *Blood Money* and *Shadow of the Beast 2*. Wayne remembers well what it was like to work with such a prestigious company. "Honestly, it was a dream come true," he smiles. "They were considered to be the best software house around at the time and Ian and Jonathan who ran Psygnosis were two of the nicest guys you could ever meet. They offered me very good advice and were more like mentors to me – you have to remember that I was pretty much still a kid at the time, still very naive with a lot to learn. They were fun times and I look back on them very fondly."

The quality of WJS Design's work was impressing more than just Psygnosis, and it wasn't long before others wanted to work with the company too, as Wayne explains. "It was all Psygnosis in the early years but later we got to work with people like Thalamus, Ocean, Microprose, Team17 and even Atari. I never really found it difficult getting work, the main problem I always faced was cashflow. In hindsight, I didn't charge anything like enough for our work and the royalty deals back then were shocking." One thing that WJS became renowned for in those early years was converting technically complex games from the Amiga to the Atari

TIMELINE

1984 ■ WJS Computing is born as Wayne decides he wants a career in videogames.

1985 ■ **Wayne's very first program is published – Electronic Author, a word processor for the Dragon 32.**

1986 ■ The very first WJS game is published by Quickbeam – *Gordon Bennett* for the Dragon 32

1987 ■ **Wayne has two more Dragon 32 games published by Quickbeam in *Frankie* and *Superkid*.**

1988 ■ The very first 16-bit WJS game is published by Psygnosis, the excellent *Baal*.

1989 ■ **Due to the success of *Baal*, Psygnosis hands WJS the Atari ST port job of DMA's *Blood Money*.**

1990 ■ Psygnosis continues the relationship with WJS by publishing the excellent *Defender* clone *Anarchy*.

1991 ■ **An underrated arcade adventure called *Ork* is published by Psygnosis for Amiga and Atari ST.**

1992 ■ WJS establishes a new publisher relationship as *Beast Lord* is published by Grandslam Entertainment.

1993 ■ **The highly acclaimed 16-bit ports of *Creatures* are produced by WJS Design.**

1994 ■ WJS create its very first licensed game – *The Adventures Of Mighty Max* for Ocean.

1995 ■ **The much-hyped Atari Jaguar game *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* is launched to a mixed reception.**

1996 ■ A PC port of *Mutant Penguins* is published by GameTek as the company is shut down.



[Atari ST] The first WJS Design game published by Psygnosis was run-and-gun *Baal*.



THE DNA OF WJS

Publisher Power

■ Through its lifetime WJS worked with some of the biggest publishers out there including companies such as Team17, Ocean Software, Atari Corporation, Thalamus and Psygnosis. This not only gave it a steady revenue stream but also meant the company got to work on some really huge projects.

Myths And Monsters

■ Over the years WJS worked on numerous games that featured mythical beasts, monsters and gruesome creatures. This very much became a theme of the company with titles such as the *Shadow Of The Beast* games, *Ork*, *Baal*, *Beastlord*, *Blood Money* and *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins*.

Atari Love

■ The first time Wayne saw an Atari ST he fell in love, and he continued his affair for many years preferring it to the Amiga because of the technical challenges it represented. So when he heard Atari was going to release the Jaguar he couldn't wait to get in on the act and soon signed a first-party contract.

School Days

■ Well before WJS became known as one of the premier ST and Amiga developers, Wayne was creating games for the Sinclair ZX81 and then Dragon 32 in his bedroom at night while attending senior school in the daytime. By the ripe old age of 15 he'd already created his first game.

Psygnosis Success

■ In the heyday of the 16-bit computer years, WJS worked almost exclusively with legendary Liverpool-based software house Psygnosis. Wayne himself very much credits the success of his career to the studio and lists Ian Hetherington and Jonathan Ellis as his most influential mentors from his younger years.



[PC] A conversion of the bestselling Amiga fighting game, *Ultimate Body Blows* was every bit as good on the PC.

> "There's a lot going on visually in Mutant Penguins, I can remember Atari asking how we managed it… not sure if we ever did tell them"
>
> Mark Robinson

ST with great aplomb. The rivalry between these two machines was just as intense as the Spectrum versus C64 battles before it. "Technically speaking anything that used the custom chips on the Amiga, which the ST didn't have, was a big challenge to port," Wayne replies when we ask him what platform he preferred working with, and what challenges the conversions presented. "Audio wasn't so much an issue as I just got a specialist to redo the music and effects for the ST. Moving sprites around on the ST was a much slower process than on Amiga, so I had to find ways of making it quick, which usually involved a lot of preshifting, which in turn used a lot more memory. It was hard work but I just loved working with the Atari, I think it all stemmed from the first time I saw one running a graphics demo, it was just so far advanced from what I was used to (the Dragon at that time). It also came out before the Amiga, which probably helped, but I liked the fact that you really had to work hard to push the ST to its limits. I loved the challenge of working out how to get the best out of the ST, especially when porting Amiga games and proving they could run just as well on the Atari machine."

This love of the Atari ST and the quality of his work on this machine put Wayne right in the driving seat when it came to landing a deal to develop games for the 64-bit Jaguar console and he's quick to tell us how this all started. "If I remember correctly, Atari UK asked a number of companies to provide a pitch for original concepts prior to launch and we were one of them," he says. "We then went to Atari towers in Slough, along with all the other companies pitching, and sat round a table to present the ideas. Ours was one of the ones chosen and *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* suddenly became a thing." Many Jaguar developers who we've interviewed over the years have spoken about the poor development tools provided by Atari, and the many undocumented bugs in the chipset that made it much more difficult than it should have been to work with.



[Atari ST] *Anarchy* is an extremely enjoyable *Defender* clone with some nice parallax scrolling.



[Atari ST] WJS did a sterling job with the ST port of DMA Design's high acclaimed *Blood Money*.

[Jaguar] The last game developed by the company, *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* is a real Marmite affair.

Wayne remembers the machine being tricky to work with. "To some extent the Jaguar was the same as the ST before it, in that you had to work hard to get the best out of it, even though it was a superior machine to everything out there at the time," he says. "The main problem was that it had more than one processor and the way the sprites were drawn required a fair bit of trickery. Also, it was the first time I had encountered parallel processing which took some getting used to, interleaving instructions to get the best performance out of the code was an art form in itself. Other than that, I do think Atari should have spent more money trying to promote it and it should never have been cartridge based either."

The development of *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* became the company's primary focus as Wayne expanded the team and decided on a name change, too. "Up until this point WJS was a sole trader business and on the advice of my accountant I switched it to a limited company and decided this was also a good opportunity to change the name as WJS wasn't particularly imaginative!" And so Sunrise Games was born.

One of the first people Wayne hired to work on this project was Mark Robinson, a programmer who had previously worked for BBC Micro maestro Superior Software. "I applied via a job ad in a computer magazine," Mark remembers. "I'm not sure which one, but it all happened pretty quickly." Working with the Jaguar was undoubtedly a huge step up from what Mark was used to. "It's always exciting to work with new hardware, it still is to this day," he says. "The Jaguar was certainly a big challenge and very different to everything else at the time having several programmable processors.

"The main challenge was that all the processors shared the memory and were trying to access it at the same time," Mark continues. "There were some tricks for this in certain cases. I can remember the first implementation of the low level graphics code that I wrote having issues. Graphics would draw correctly but as more and more objects came on screen the audio would slow down. A few revisions later of that code and figuring out to make it optimal cured the problem. There is a lot going on visually in *Mutant Penguins*, I can remember Atari asking how we managed to do it, not sure if we ever did tell them or not!"



Sadly for the newly formed Sunrise, *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* would be the developer's first and last game. The title had received mix reviews in the press and wasn't anywhere near enough to save the ailing console. Atari then decided to exit the videogame industry, leaving both Sunrise and Wayne high and dry with no money in the pot and nowhere to go.

Wayne looks back at this period without any regrets and prefers to remember the good times, and there's one anecdote in particular he's keen to share. "Well, as you know, making games is a serious business but I do remember getting into a fax war with DMA Design," he says. "It started off by faxing cartoon drawings by our respective artists then quickly escalated into faxing anything – Kit-Kat wrappers for example. We won though, when we faxed a toilet roll to them and they ended up switching their machine off!"

WJS artist Kevin Oxland leaves us with one last thought on those years and his lasting memory of his time there. "It was all just so crazy, moving at a hundred miles an hour all the time. It's often quite hard to remember any specific moments because of this, but Wayne was a great boss who always encouraged creativity and the office was never short of fun." *

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Wayne Smithson

■ After the final demise of his company in 1995, Wayne has continued to be a big influence on the industry working for big-hitting companies such as Gremlin Interactive, Sumo Digital and Double Eleven – where he remains to this day. His post-WJS CV contains many hit titles such as *DiRT 2*, *F1 2009*, *Grand Theft Auto 2*, *Sonic All-Star Racing*, *Jackie Chan Adventures*, *LittleBigPlanet* and the *PixelJunk* series.

Kevin Oxland

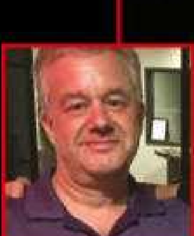
■ Since departing WJS Design in 1990, Kevin went on to work with luminaries such as Ocean Software (which WJS had previously worked alongside), Virgin Interactive, Westwood Studios and Grolier Interactive before setting up his own company in 1999 called Spiral House. He still runs this studio in the northwest of the UK to this day and has helped produce titles such as *Blur*, *Lumo* and *Alone In The Dark*.

Wulf Warren



■ Much like Kevin Oxland, graphic artist Chris Warren (as he was then known) went to work for Ocean and Virgin Interactive after a small stint with Images software. He then returned to WJS Design once more in 1994 as it morphed into Sunrise Games. After the demise of the company in 1996 he decided to leave the industry altogether and hasn't looked back since, changing his name and becoming a bit of an enigma.

Mark Robinson



■ After starting his career in the games industry with Superior Software and the *Repton* series, Mark just went from strength to strength. Through his life he's worked for companies such as Vektor Graphics, Team17 and most recently at Rockstar San Diego where he worked on the hugely popular *Midnight Club* series as well as the original *Red Dead Redemption*. He left the industry in 2010 and now programs car navigation systems.



» [SNES] As the stages get harder, you'll need to think more about foreplanning and foresight if you want to solve the level.

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** Acclaim, Virgin
» **DEVELOPER:** Audiogenic, Fox Williams
» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **GENRE:** Platformer
» **PLATFORM:** Various

THE MAKING OF KRUSTY'S FUN HOUSE

» [SNES] The odd poster was added to the backgrounds as references to *Simpsons* characters or episodes.

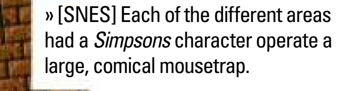
While Acclaim was looking for as many opportunities to leverage The Simpsons family as much as it could, the opportunity to rerelease an overlooked Amiga game gave Krusty The Clown a chance in the spotlight

Words by Adam Barnes

The story of *Krusty's Fun House* is not unfamiliar. At a time when the videogames industry was just trying to find its feet, developers were looking at every possible way of making an impact, to make the most of the boom that it was going through. In many cases this was licensees and licensors looking to make an investment. *Krusty's Fun House* is perhaps the epitome of this period: *The Simpsons* had only just begun to make it with games, and typically it was with Bart as the face on the box. But Acclaim – which had the rights to *The Simpsons* and had seen how successful the licence was with *Bart Vs The Space Mutants* – was eager to squeeze as much out of the cartoon as was humanly possible. *Bart Vs The Space Mutants* launched in February of 1991, and in the two years that followed there were nine – yep, *nine* – different *Simpsons*-based titles spread across the entire spectrum of platforms, and by the time the publisher's interest in the licence had petered out in 1995, it had released 13 *Simpsons* games across a eclectic mix of genres. *Krusty's Fun House* was just one example of this catalogue, yet despite its inelegant origin it still managed to garner a surprising amount of interest.

"I was working as a freelancer on a potential original idea for a game for Audiogenic for the Super Nintendo," explains Douglas Hare, the sole programmer working on *Krusty's Fun House*. "In the process of doing that I got involved with the company, and during that time Audiogenic had a game on the Amiga and Atari ST that was basically very similar to what *Krusty's Super Fun House* became. They decided to license, or rather they sold an idea of that game and attached it with a *Simpsons* theme, with the *Simpsons* IP wrapped around it." This original game was *Rat Trap*, a game starring a big-headed, pink-haired boy who had to guide rats that wandered automatically about the stage towards a machine by placing blocks in certain places. It was loosely similar in concept to *Lemmings*, but rather than save those hapless rodents the focus was instead to exterminate them. The idea for Audiogenic was to take this design, which had already been released, and slap a *Simpsons* filter over it. "Acclaim got me to do it, so I basically took this Amiga game and did a port, effectively, off that but with the *Simpsons* graphics instead of the non-*Simpsons* IP that it had been before."

Rat Trap hadn't made much of a splash when it first released on Amiga, Atari ST and Commodore 64 in 1991. And because it was so overlooked, it was an easy game to simply rework and bring over to a wider array of platforms. "*Rat Trap* was developed by two guys, the company was called Fox Williams," says Douglas, explaining that the company was named after its two sole developers, Patrick Fox and Scott Williams. "I suppose you could look at the fact that there is virtually nothing on *Rat Trap* to show that it wasn't very successful," adds Douglas. "Someone sort of realised that maybe if it had the *Simpsons* component



» [SNES] Each of the different areas had a *Simpsons* character operate a large, comical mousetrap.







CONVERSION CAPERS

SNES



■ It's a tough one to call it between the SNES and the Mega Drive, but it's hard to overlook the fact that the SNES version has brighter colours and a little more detail. It's also the only version – aside from the PC version – of the game that featured a spotlight in the intro scene.

MEGA DRIVE





■ The classic tale here: the speed of the Mega Drive meant it felt a little smoother, while the high contrast of its colours meant there was a darker edge to everything, which was beneficial for the look. It had a tweaked UI and even the visual design of the levels changed (just look at the bricks used here).

MASTER SYSTEM



■ Easily the most garish of them all, even more so than the NES version, the Master System suffers from horrific colours – Krusty's head matching the walls, even – and a very limited palette. It plays just fine, though it's a little too floaty when compared to its bigger brothers.

GAME GEAR

■ With perhaps the floatiest controls of all, the Game Gear version is the most frustrating of all the conversions to play – especially considering the tiny screen of the Game Gear. Visually it played its part, though, and even benefitted for the particle effects of the bigger versions.

AMIGA





■ The Amiga port of *Krusty's Fun House* is very robust with a high level of detail in the graphics, sharing the same design and look as the Mega Drive version. Its controls err more towards the floaty side, rather than the smoother movements of the more better versions, but it does have its own UI built just for this version.

DOS

■ Naturally the power behind the IBM PC means that this is one of the stronger versions of the game, with graphics that match the SNES equivalent – even its own take on the spotlight effect of the intro – and perhaps the best audio, too. It's notoriously a little buggy, but is a solid port all the same.

NES

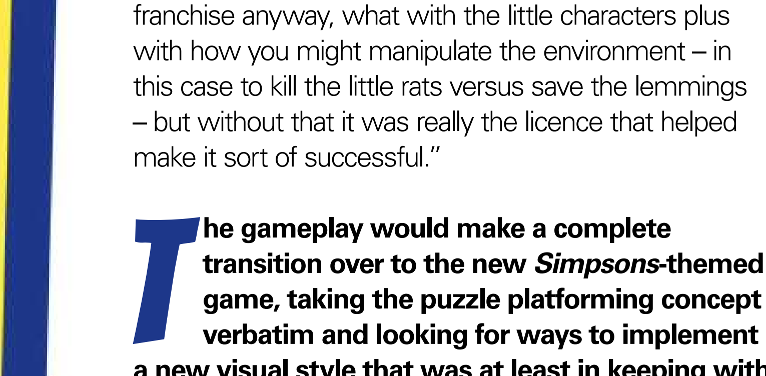


■ Visually, the NES version is the worst of the lot, and not solely because of the flickering sprites that it suffers from. The basic colour palette means it doesn't have the soft detail of the more powerful consoles, but worst still is how the blocks and characters can all blend into one.

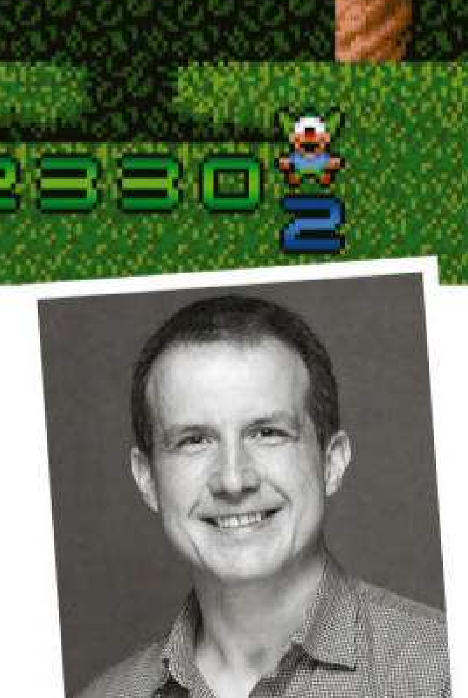
GAME BOY

■ The issue with the Game Boy version is that, because of the size of the screen and the lack of colour, it isn't the easiest to read. The levels had to be readjusted to work, too, though the crux of the puzzles is always the same, of course. Even so, it's still a remarkable portable equivalent.

» [SNES] There was always a satisfaction to seeing those rats flying towards certain death.



to it, then it might get a bit more recognition. The core game itself actually sort of lends itself well to the franchise anyway, what with the little characters plus with how you might manipulate the environment – in this case to kill the little rats versus save the lemmings – but without that it was really the licence that helped make it sort of successful."



» Douglas Hare was the sole programmer working on *Krusty's Fun House*.

The gameplay would make a complete transition over to the new *Simpsons*-themed game, taking the puzzle platforming concept verbatim and looking for ways to implement a new visual style that was at least in keeping with the cartoon that it was now adopting. You'll likely never get your hands on *Rat Trap* now, though there are ROMs and videos out there for those interested in seeing just how similar the two games are. "The biggest thing is that quite a lot of graphics for the backgrounds of the levels are the same in *Rat Trap* as they are in *Krusty's Fun House*," says Douglas. "They basically took that game and threw Krusty in, put some Duff Beer posters in the background and obviously made the rats more Matt Groening-ified and things like that. You can see that it's obviously very similar, to an extent that it actually enabled me to have an opportunity to focus on my own sorts of little flourishes, sort of *Simpson*-y bits and pieces." He adds that "for the most part it was actually modelled on that original game", and that Audiogenic had actually earned the rights to use the exact same sprites and backgrounds in the game.

Despite the fact that much of the work was done with *Krusty's Fun House* before it made it to Douglas, there were still things that needed to be tackled and it certainly wasn't being considered by anyone at Audiogenic or even at Acclaim as an easy turnaround. "Although it was modelled on a game on the Amiga, it wasn't as though it was seen as anything other than an important title," says Douglas, keen to stress that it wasn't just a rush job for quick and easy cash. "It wasn't as though people weren't thinking about it, you know? And they were obviously trying to adhere to the correct likeness of the cartoon and they had to go through approvals. It was all done to make it look as *Simpsons*-y as possible, and a lot of effort was spent on that. It's just that this was a firm house that was leveraging a style of game that had been developed, which Acclaim was aware of. It was represented as: 'We're doing this game, but we're going to make it look *Simpsons*-y.'"

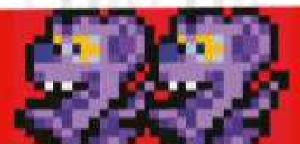
» [SNES] Homer appears in the second set of stages, this time with a laser beam to fry those pesky pests.



» [SNES] The addition of effects like spinning stars was added from the original *Rat Trap* game, though it was hard to know how much health you had.





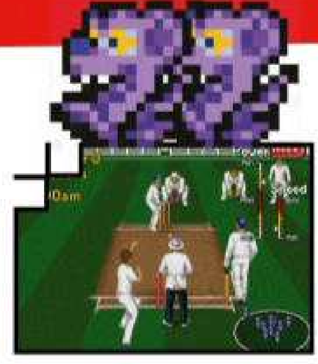


As part of that determination to make something that felt '*Simpsons*-y', the artwork was needed to match the style of Matt Groening. The rats were made to be more bug-eyed, that wimpy pink-haired boy swapped out for Krusty himself, while Bart, Homer and Krusty's assistants Corporal Punishment and Sideshow Mel were enlisted to operate the mice-killing traps that were the primary goal of the game. The machines themselves didn't even change, instead *Simpsons* characters were simply affixed to the side of them like a comical bumper sticker. "So, I can't remember what the division of the labour was between Scott Williams and Patrick Fox in terms of the art," recalls Douglas, "but one of them had created the backgrounds and base sprites for *Rat Trap*. Obviously Audiogenic inherited a lot of the art for the backgrounds, but except for that a lot of it was built from scratch, particularly for the characters and stuff. That was all Richard Boston, and he did a good job of capturing a lot of personality in the graphics." Even aspects like the score bar at the bottom remained largely unchanged: hearts became Krusty icons, stones became custard pies, but otherwise it was the very same.

But that doesn't mean that certain aspects weren't altered or even improved. This wasn't just a quick botch job, and though Douglas explains that it took roughly four months to get everything ready, the fact that there was already a foundation to base the game on meant that there was a lot of scope for tweaks and improvements. "There were a lot of just little flourishy things I could add, for instance when Krusty comes in and he's sort of heralded in with a spotlight and stuff like that. The core game, as you can see, was substantially taken from the Amiga *Rat Trap* game. With the art for the backgrounds already done, it was really just a case of getting that art sent over to me and then me implementing it. But with that said, there were opportunities to do add in my own little flourishes, as I say, like fun particle effects." Douglas didn't have much in the way of design for the way the game was played, so he used aspects like the spinning stars that appeared if Krusty was hit or the way that the rats were crushed with a splat rather than passively disappearing from existence to help add some greater visual flair to the game – which *Rat Trap* had struggled with. "The game itself – the layouts and the puzzle aspect of it – was already there," says Douglas, "so I added in things like the particle effects or the intro sequence where Krusty is introduced with a spotlight. That wasn't in any design, that was just me; I was thinking it would be nice to have Krusty walking in on the spotlight as he does on the show. There wasn't really much opportunity for me as a freelancer to add to or change the game in any real major way."

So while it was down to Richard to create the art, it was up to Douglas to deal with the technical sides of things. The move to machines like the SNES and Mega Drive meant that there was a chance to improve on the base *Rat Trap* game, too, most apparent in the smoother movement of the game's characters and the animations that went with it – even if the animation wasn't all that different from what had been created for the original. "Mostly it was about improving the parallax layers," explains Douglas of the process of porting to more powerful hardware. "I don't think it was ever parallax in the ST version, and so adding that sort of stuff in was most of my work. And adding a nice sort of colour gradiated rasterised bits into the background; they were some of the stuff I was able to add as well." It wasn't necessarily an easy task, though, he adds; though the design of the game was already done, porting it over required some degree of knowledge. "It was a pretty technical challenge in some ways," he recalls, "thinking that, 'Hey, this stuff here, I'm gonna do that on the SNES but make it better,' and so it just became more of a technical challenge rather than design work or art."

However, Douglas was only working on the SNES version of the game, which would release in 1992. It would also go on to release on Mega Drive and PC, and later across NES, Master System, Game Gear, Game Boy and Amiga. "I didn't know too much about the business decisions behind it," admits Douglas, "I just knew that Acclaim were interested in having different versions. I did the SNES version, someone else did the Mega Drive version and so on, and they contacted me as a freelancer to do it." Yet while the four months of work might not have involved the most complex design or development work, Audiogenic was right to approach Acclaim about bringing the game over to *The Simpsons*. *Krusty's Fun House* – or *Krusty's Super Fun House* as it was called on SNES and Mega Drive – would go on to garner a great deal of success and though reviewers found it to be a little simplistic. It may not have had the passion of its developers or have resulted in smash sales like *Bart Vs The World* did, but there's something a little more honest about *Krusty's Fun House*. It gave Krusty a chance to shine before his *Simpsons* character spiralled into darkness, it gave a fond if impassioned memory for those who played it to look back on, but mostly importantly it gave a second chance to a game that would have otherwise been totally lost to time. ✱



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

EXILE
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1988

BUBBLE & SQUEAK
SYSTEM: AMIGA, MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1994

BRIAN LARA CRICKET (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1996



» [SNES] There was no real pattern or theme to the stages, even the idea of an actual fun house wasn't really apparent.

UNDER THE SKIN

More rejigged games



THE LAST STARFIGHTER

■ Born from a much-loved game on the Commodore 64 called *Uridium*, this reskin took the very same design, slapped the name of the movie on it and called it a day. It actually wasn't a bad game – thanks to the original, of course – and some effort was spent on revamping the graphics and smoothing out the controls.



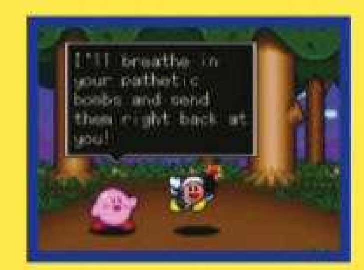
THE MUNCHER

■ Originally in development under the name of *T-Wrecks* for ZX Spectrum, the game was reskinned once chewy sweets company Chewits got involved. The game, which was similar in style to *Rampage*, didn't even feature the cuddly Chewits-esque dinosaur from the advertising. The developer simply plastered its visage on the title screen.



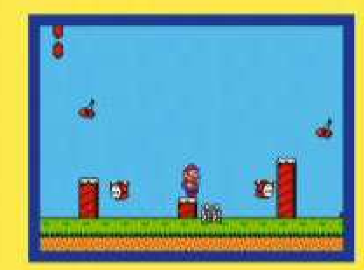
DECAP ATTACK

■ A familiar story of how a game can often change radically when moving from Japan to the West. The gameplay was the same as its original title *Magical Hat No Buttobi Tabo! Daibouken*, but this reskin was so vast that you'd be hard-pressed to spot the difference thanks to a darker western look and even redesigned levels.



KIRBY'S AVALANCHE

■ Nowadays this sort of thing might happen with match-three games on mobile, but back on the SNES *Super Puyo Puyo* was reskinned in the west as *Kirby's Avalanche*. Mechanically it was identical, but there were visual changes that came with the adoption of *Kirby* – most notable being the pink fluffball's sarcasm during cutscenes.



SUPER MARIO BROS 2

■ Easily the most famous reskin of them all – even Nintendo wasn't above rejigging a game. *Doki Doki Panic* was developed as part of a deal with Fuji Television, reskinned to appeal to a Western audience who didn't appreciate the difficulty of *The Lost Levels*. Still, it ended up having a big impact on the *Mario* franchise.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

FANTASY

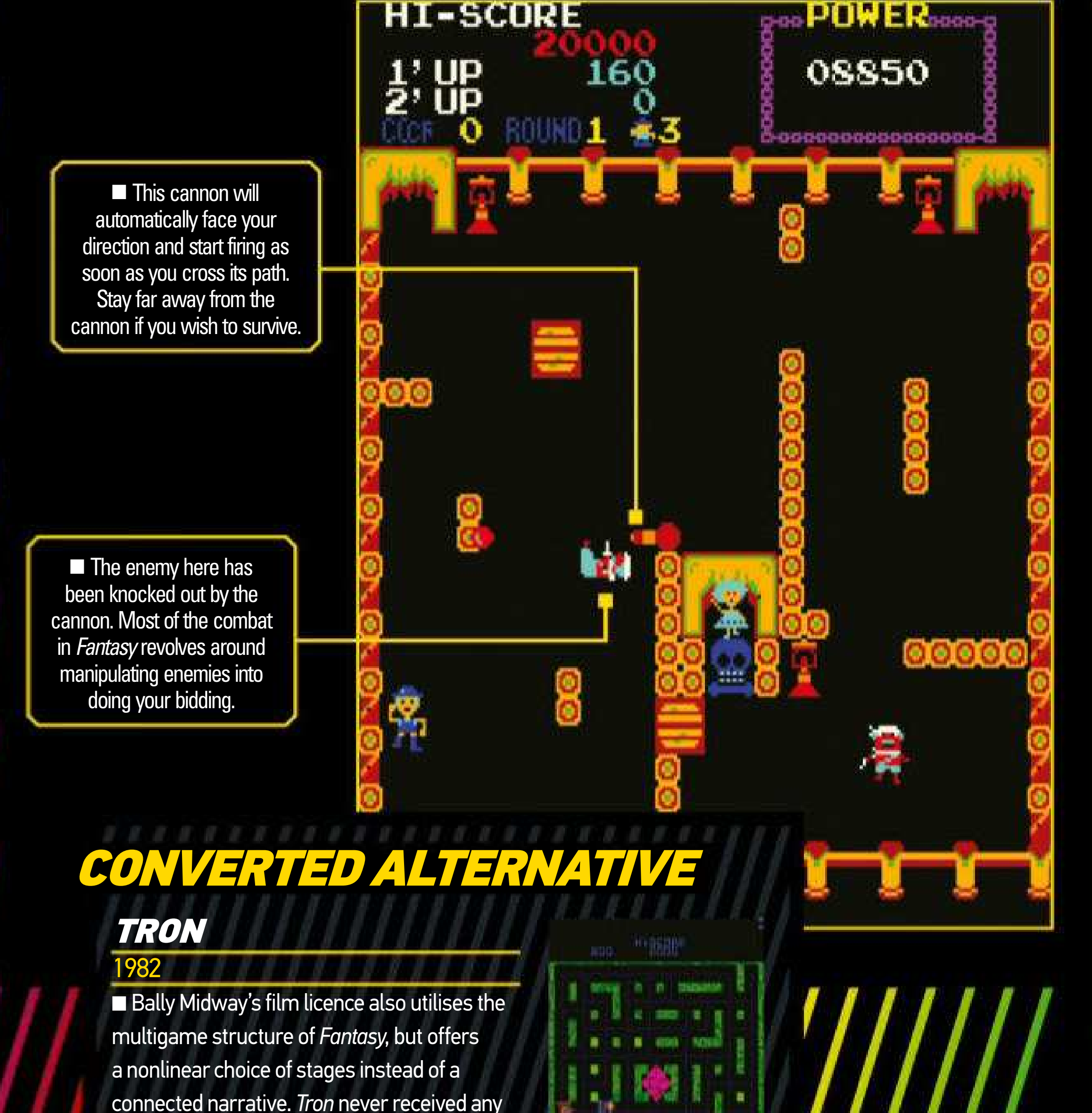
DEVELOPER: **SNK** YEAR: **1981** GENRE: **ACTION**

■ **It's incredible that *Fantasy* doesn't get more recognition as a little slice of gaming history, because it did a lot of things that just weren't common in 1981.** At a time when simple, single-goal games such as *Ms Pac-Man*, *Scramble*, *Galaga* and *Frogger* dominated the market, *Fantasy* presented the player with a unique challenge on each screen. There was even a simple narrative to accompany the action, played out wordlessly on the screen. Sure, it was only a bloke rescuing his girlfriend from a variety of different situations, but it was still *something*.

The game is controlled entirely with a joystick, and starts with your girlfriend Cheri falling victim to a kidnapping. You set off in pursuit using your hot air balloon, and have to land it on the boat that the nefarious kidnapper has absconded upon. Once there you have to rescue Cheri from the prison on deck, taking out pirates by leading them into the path of cannon fire. From there, you'll proceed to evade birds in the sky, journey through a jungle and fight a local tribe, dodge helicopters and eventually complete your rescue above a heavily defended bridge. Tasks range from reaching a target to eliminating enemies and sometimes simply surviving, and are easily explained with only a couple of words before each stage.

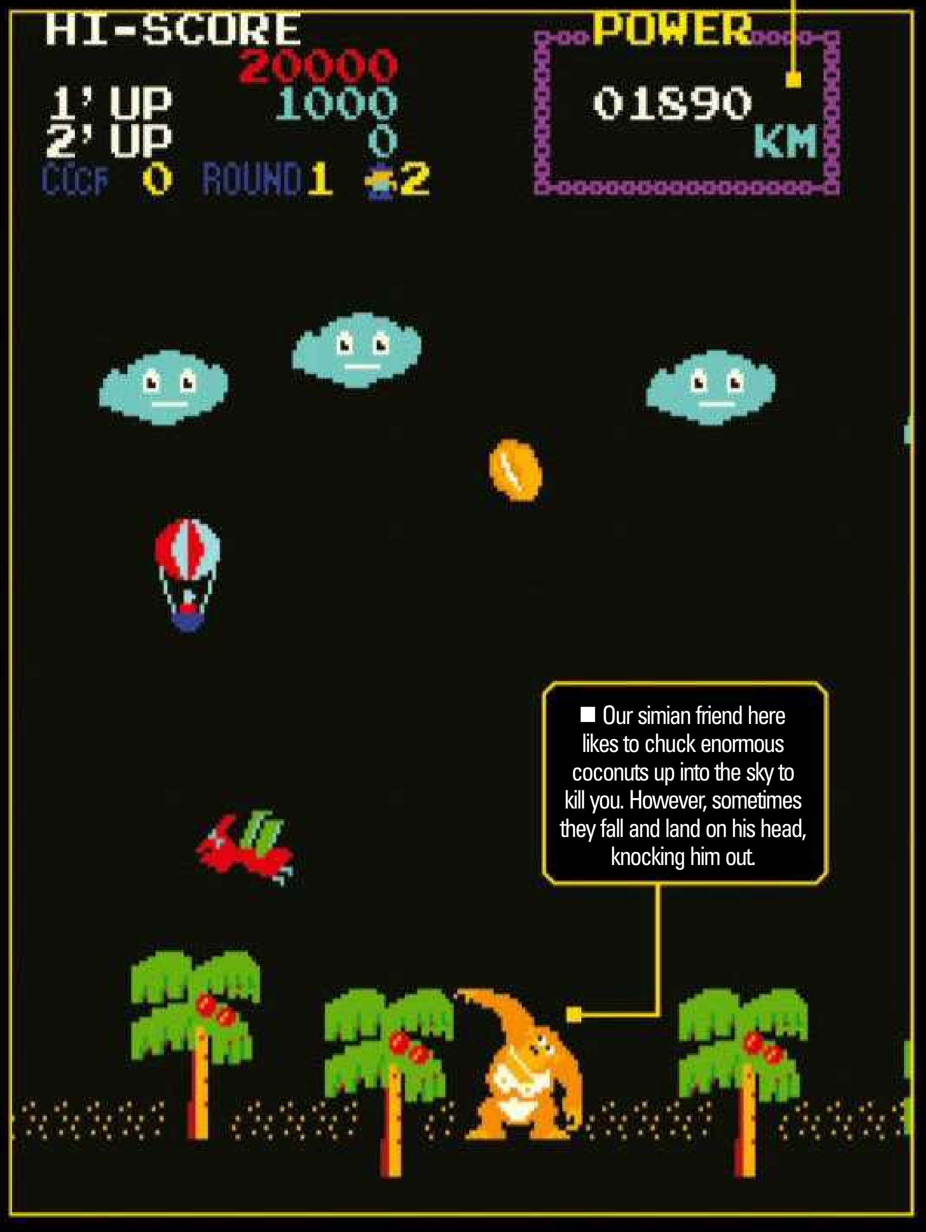
By the standards of games released in 1981, *Fantasy* offered an astonishing amount of variety. It also offered something else unique – a continue option. Since the game had a defined narrative and a proper ending screen, it was only right to offer players another opportunity to pass screens they'd failed (providing, of course, that they paid for another credit).

Although *Fantasy* was never released for a home platform, an attempt was made to do so. A TI-99/4A version was in development in 1983, but never ended up making it to release. This is a real shame, as a good home version of *Fantasy* would have massively boosted the game's recognition amongst players – assuming that the developers could have waited a little bit for an appropriately powerful platform like the ColecoVision or Commodore 64.



■ This cannon will automatically face your direction and start firing as soon as you cross its path. Stay far away from the cannon if you wish to survive.

■ The enemy here has been knocked out by the cannon. Most of the combat in *Fantasy* revolves around manipulating enemies into doing your bidding.



■ The Power box here shows your progress within the stage. The goal is to reach 3000km, so the player here still has a considerable distance to go yet.

■ Our simian friend here likes to chuck enormous coconuts up into the sky to kill you. However, sometimes they fall and land on his head, knocking him out.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

TRON

1982

■ Bally Midway's film licence also utilises the multigame structure of *Fantasy*, but offers a nonlinear choice of stages instead of a connected narrative. *Tron* never received any contemporary conversions, but was made available as a digital download for Xbox 360 in 2008 and is still up for sale now.

HOOPS '96

DEVELOPER: **DATA EAST** YEAR: **1995** GENRE: **SPORTS**

■ **This street basketball game has the same sort of feel as *NBA Jam* – the game supports four players and has similarly lax rules and fast action.** However, Data East's game is played with teams of three and doesn't divide the games into quarters, instead playing for a single period.

All of your moves are handled on two buttons. Shooting and blocking jumps are performed by pressing A, and passes and steals are handled with button B. A super bar builds up each time you score a basket, and when full this can be utilised with a double tap of the A button. If you're near the basket, you'll perform a super dunk, and from further away you'll make a super three point shot. If you don't have the ball, you can attempt a super defence instead, which is capable of shutting out an opponent's super dunk. While the cartoon graphics aren't a huge step up from those seen in *Hoops* predecessor *Street Hoop*, the Data East MLC hardware is put to good use with a zoom effect that serves to intensify the visual impact of hard dunks.

Data East's financial woes in 1996 precluded the company from ever converting this to a home console, which is a shame because it's a lot of fun.



» [Arcade] Firing off a Super Shot is a good option… but the oppenent also has a Super Defense ready to go.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

STREET HOOP

1994

■ It's a little less balanced, doesn't feature the improved super moves and only supports two players, but the forerunner to *Hoops '96* was converted widely. It's available on Neo-Geo AES and CD, on the Wii's Data East Arcade Classics compilation, and on modern consoles digitally via *Arcade Archives*.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

DYNAMITE COP

1998

■ It's not quite the same game, but *Dynamite Cop* features most of the same level layouts and enemy patterns, so you mostly miss out on the silly costumes – but the original game was silly enough in the first place. The home version was released exclusively for the Dreamcast in all regions.



ASIAN DYNAMITE

DEVELOPER: **SEGA** YEAR: **2006** GENRE: **BEAT-'EM-UP**

■ **Here's a real oddity.** *Dynamite Cop* was a Model 2 arcade game that got converted to Dreamcast, and *Asian Dynamite* is the game making its way back to arcades via the Naomi board – albeit with a makeover and mechanical changes that mean it can't technically be considered the same thing.

The first thing you'll notice is that *Asian Dynamite* has received all-new models and textures. These are of a high quality for the hardware, but the Dreamcast technology was of course somewhat dated by 2006. However, as with many games released at this point in time, most of the backgrounds rely on brown-orange and grey colour schemes. The power-up system has been revamped too, as briefcases now contain costume changes which alter the characters moves and abilities. Each character has three choices, some of which are pretty ridiculous – Bruno Delinger can go all military, Jennifer Genuine can become a jester and Caroline Powel transforms into a hopping zombie.

Asian Dynamite wasn't a high profile game, and ran contrary to the home market, so Sega was content to leave it in arcades.



» [Arcade] Those fancy models and textures aren't fooling anyone. We know what you've done, Sega.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

AVENGERS IN GALACTIC STORM

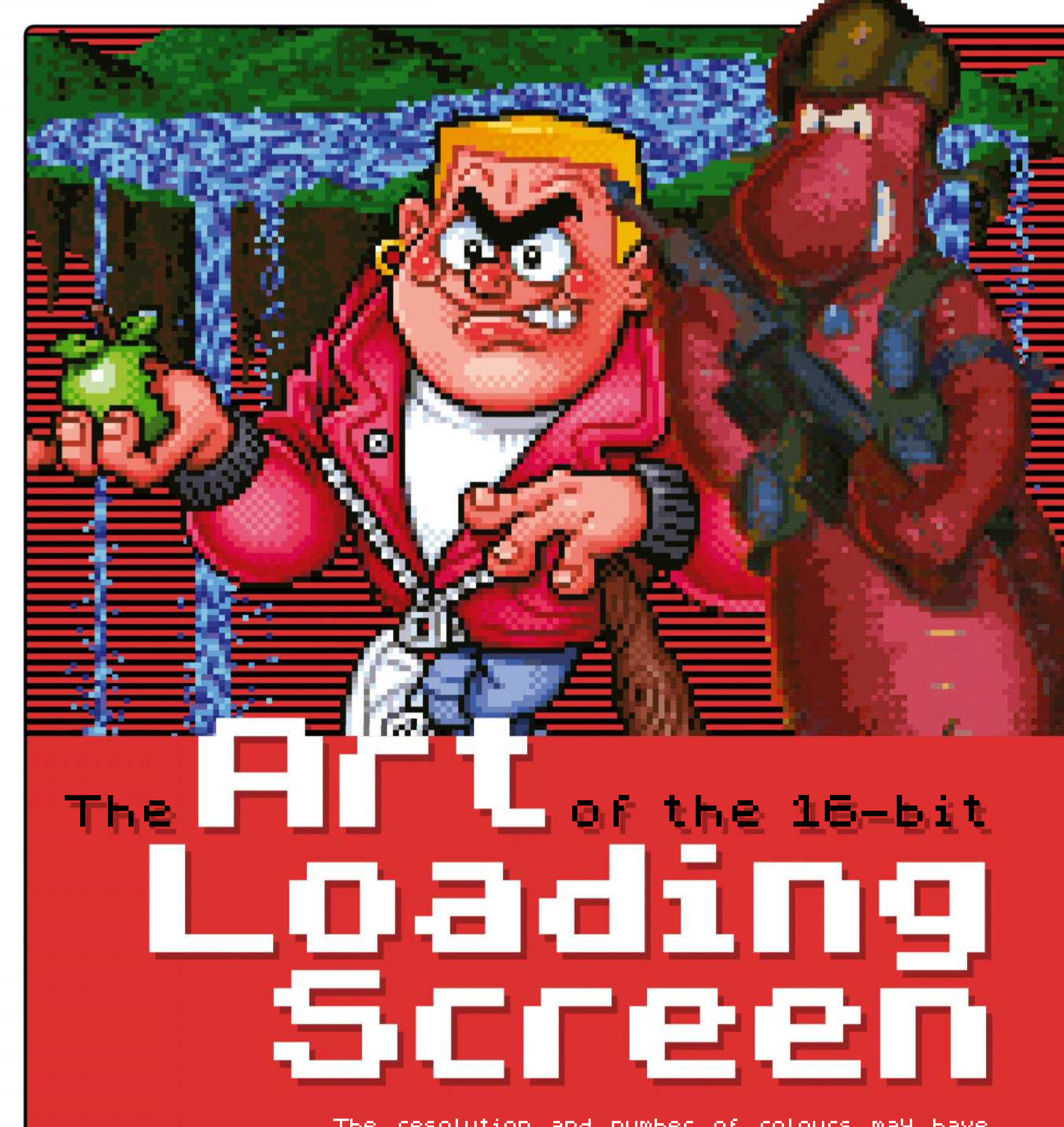
DEVELOPER: **DATA EAST** YEAR: **1995** GENRE: **FIGHTING**

■ **Given how massive the Marvel films are today, it's easy to forget that the company was in a bankruptcy crisis back in the mid-Nineties.** Part of the problem was poor quality comics sold on gimmicks, and *Avengers In Galactic Storm* reflects that – it's a poor quality fighting game that relies on its prerendered 3D sprites.

There are just four characters to choose from, though the game does at least offer plenty more to fight against. Moves are generally pretty dull and standard, but some are vastly overpowered – how exactly does a regular fighter get a screen-filling super move? There's no flow to combos, either.

Oh, and then there's the graphics. While the press at the time compared the models favourably to those of *Killer Instinct*, the look has dated horribly – it feels like plastic action figures battling. Compare this to *X-Men: Children Of The Atom* and it's clear that Capcom's game looks better and more authentic to the comics. This is one storm that you definitely shouldn't chase.





The Art of the 16-bit Loading Screen

The resolution and number of colours may have increased, but loading screens remained an important part of the 16-bit gaming era. We talk to leading artists of the time to find out how they created their many memorable screens

Words by Andrew Fisher

The 3.5-inch floppy disk is inserted, the drive whirrs away and up pops a 16-bit loading screen. Although loading times were often shorter than tapes, the first glimpse of a new game for Amiga and Atari ST users was usually a logo or a loading screen. It set the tone and got users ready for a new gaming experience.

Gone were the double-wide pixels, and in came a new way of handling colours – bitplanes, sections of memory used to specify the colour of an image. The more bitplanes, the more colours.

» [Amiga] The *Kid Chaos* title screen uses copper lists to add extra colours and moving clouds.

As the Atari ST and Amiga shared a similar resolution, art was often created and transferred between them. Simon Phipps, artist at Core Design, recalls, "All of mine were done in the base 16-colour mode on the ST and ported over to Amiga – the less I had to touch the Amiga and its interface, the better for me!" Simon Butler, of Ocean Software, was more pragmatic. "I never did two sets of graphics, so whatever version I created first would then be used for the other 16-bit machine. I stayed with the native resolution of 320x200." Artist Jim Sachs says, "I created all the artwork on the Amiga, then detuned it down to 16-colour on the Atari ST. Not that I did much work on the Atari – it was 95% Amiga."

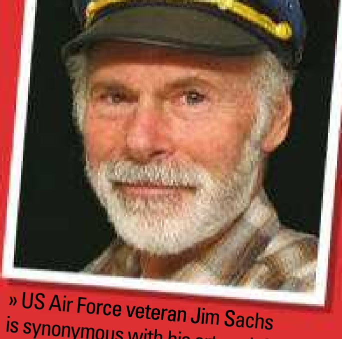
New machines needed new techniques. Andrew Morris, cofounder of Magnetic Fields, comments, "A long time before it became a commonly recognised technique, I started doing anti-aliasing to make diagonal or round lines look smoother. I worked this out through trial-and-error and it gave me an edge over other people who didn't do it." Andrew says, "I stuck with 320x200



» [Atari ST] Palette cycling helped animate this waterfall demo picture from *Deluxe Paint*.

(or 256), which everyone used for games, with a good choice of colours. There was far more freedom than you had with in-game graphics. Having said that, using copper lists [on the Amiga], we had backdrops with over 100 colours in *Kid Chaos*. These were a nightmare to design and took ages, slowly putting them together in sections."

Simon Phipps remembers a particular technique he used. "The most memorable one was my first screen, for *Masters Of The Universe*. I took a ▶



» US Air Force veteran Jim Sachs is synonymous with his artwork for *Defender Of The Crown*.

“I’d do a few rough doodles just to get the layout right and get an idea of balance and scale”

Stoo Cambridge



» [Atari ST] *Magic Mountain*, a demo picture included with Degas.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

The tools of the trade that artists used on the various 16-bit systems

Many artists revered Deluxe Paint, the graphics program that developed from the art tool Prism used internally at Electronic Arts. There were versions for Amiga, Atari ST and DOS and it became widespread in the games industry. The IFF (Interchangeable File Format) used was intended to standardise file formats for graphics and audio, making it easier to exchange files between software companies. Famously, *Monkey Island*’s hero Guybrush Threepwood was named after guybrush.bbm (a ‘guy’ saved as a ‘brush’ file).

Over on the ST there were other choices. A version of Neochrome was included on early system disks, giving it a headstart. Perhaps the most famous ST art program was DEGAS (and its follow-up Degas Elite) by Tom Hudson. Its name stood for Design & Entertainment Graphic Arts System. It allowed multiple work screens in memory and included its own file format for storing files with or without compression.

» [Atari ST] The many tools and options available in the original Degas.

massive sheet of tracing paper, drew a super-fine grid on it, laid it over the movie poster and spent a couple of days going row-by-row, line-by-line across the grid plotting each pixel by hand. I got a far better result than I would have been able to draw freehand at the time.”

Jim Sachs, the renowned artist on *Cinemaware’s Defender Of The Crown*, developed his own techniques. “I recall a very large number of hours creating art one pixel at a time. I also did a lot of experimenting with colour cycling and found I could do reasonable simulations of water, fire, and shiny metal.” Jim changed art package several times. “I started with Graphicraft, switched to Aegis Images (the two were virtually identical), then Deluxe Paint when it came out. Towards the end, I used Brilliance.” Stoo Cambridge, who joined Sensible Software in its heyday, was another convert to Brilliance. “After trying the cover disk demo out I was immediately impressed at the speed and functionality it offered, it even had the same keyboard shortcuts; I was sold!”

Simon Butler praises one particular art package. “For the Amiga, Deluxe Paint was so powerful it met your every need,” he says. “The ST was another kettle of fish. Degas only handled static graphics, so to check my animation I would set up eight screens, accessed via the function keys. I would then draw each frame in the top left of the screens and check the frames by running my finger along the function keys.

» Simon Butler’s (left) started his career at the ill-fated Imagine Software in his native Liverpool, before joining Ocean.

» Andrew Morris (right) joined forces with Shaun Southern at Mr Chip Software before founding their own company, Magnetic Fields.

It seems most of our interviewees liked to start work directly on the screen, rarely making sketches. On occasion, reference material was necessary, though. “On *Defender Of The Crown*, Kellyn Beeck sent me some reference material, and I found a lot on my own,” Jim Sachs says. “Things like the look of chain mail, castle construction, etc.” Simon Phipps did share with us some sketches, including a draft of the *Rick Dangerous 2* cover.

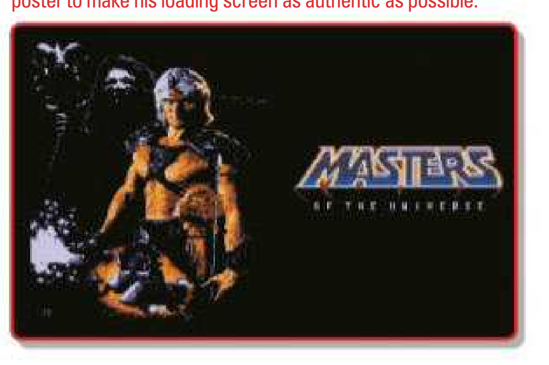
Andrew provides an interesting insight. “Many of my people were loosely copied from catalogues or magazines, and looked a bit stiff. Naming no names, a producer once told me, ‘Always make sure the girls have big boobs.’ It was a different time.” Andrew continues, “I often designed straight onto the screen. Other times I might copy or adapt box artwork. With *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge*, I based the title screen on a photo of the car I took and Gremlin liked it so much, they used it on the box. *Kid Chaos* used the box art combined with one of my multicoloured backdrops.”

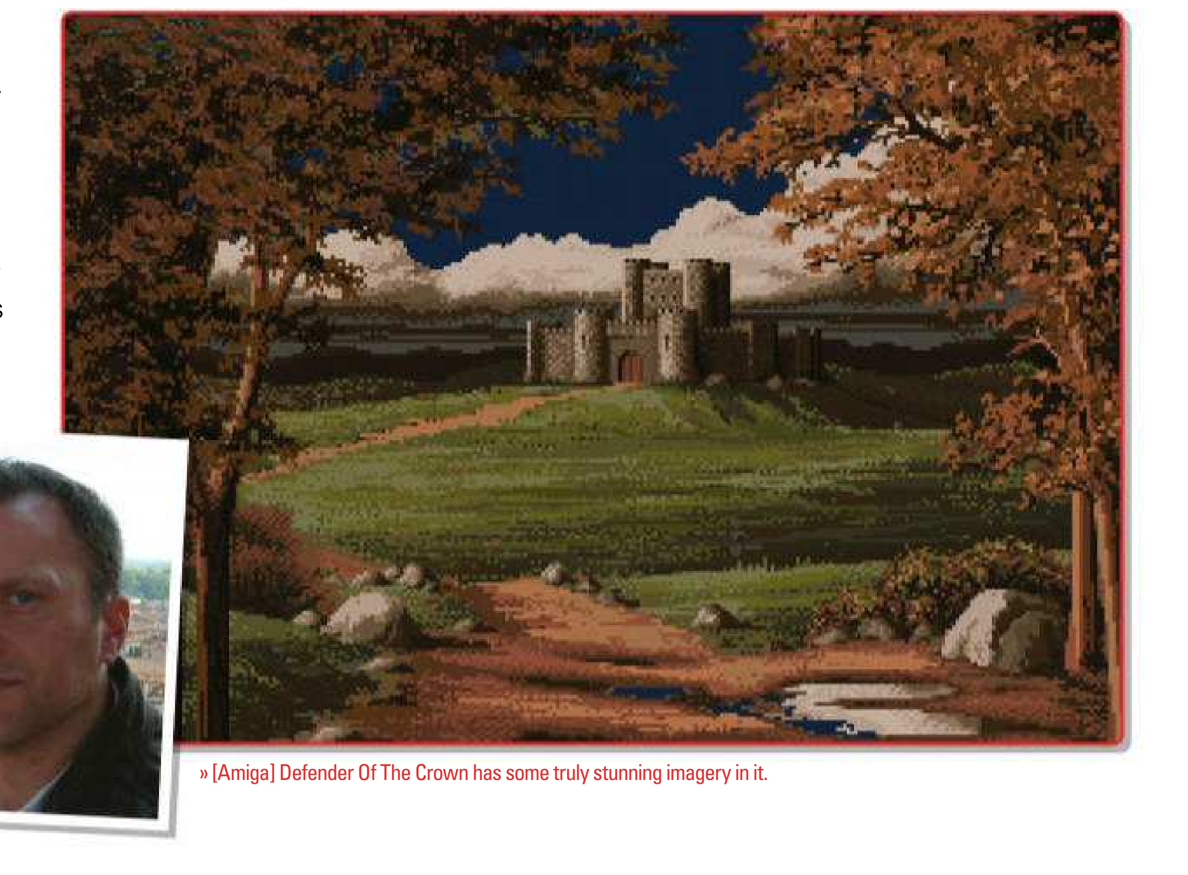
“On some of the early screens I just made it up as the final box art was hardly ever available before a game was finished,” Stoo remembers. “Sometimes I’d do a few rough doodles just to get the layout right and get an idea of balance and scale. These were very rough pen scribbles on a notepad, nothing that really resembled the final screen, just a guide.”

Although the 16-bit consoles may have loaded instantly, the games often had introductory screens. The SNES was famous for Mode 7, but it also had a little-used high-resolution mode. The Mega Drive had multiple background planes to enable easier scrolling, and other tricks including palette cycling. “I spent about 18 months redrawing and adding more colour to all of the art in *Wolfchild* – I added more colours for the Mega Drive version and even more for the SNES,” Simon Phipps says. “And then I had to tear it all down to get it into a Master System. We did it though!” Simon Butler says, “Developing for the consoles was a breath of fresh air. You still had restrictions but they were less stringent and you could flex your artistic muscles for the first time. I worked on *Addams Family*, which was the greatest experience of my career, and *Dennis*, which almost finished it.”

The company logo was an integral part of the loading experience, with

» [Amiga] Simon Phipps drew a grid over the original movie poster to make his loading screen as authentic as possible.





» [Amiga] Defender Of The Crown has some truly stunning imagery in it.

CHOOSE YOUR CANVAS

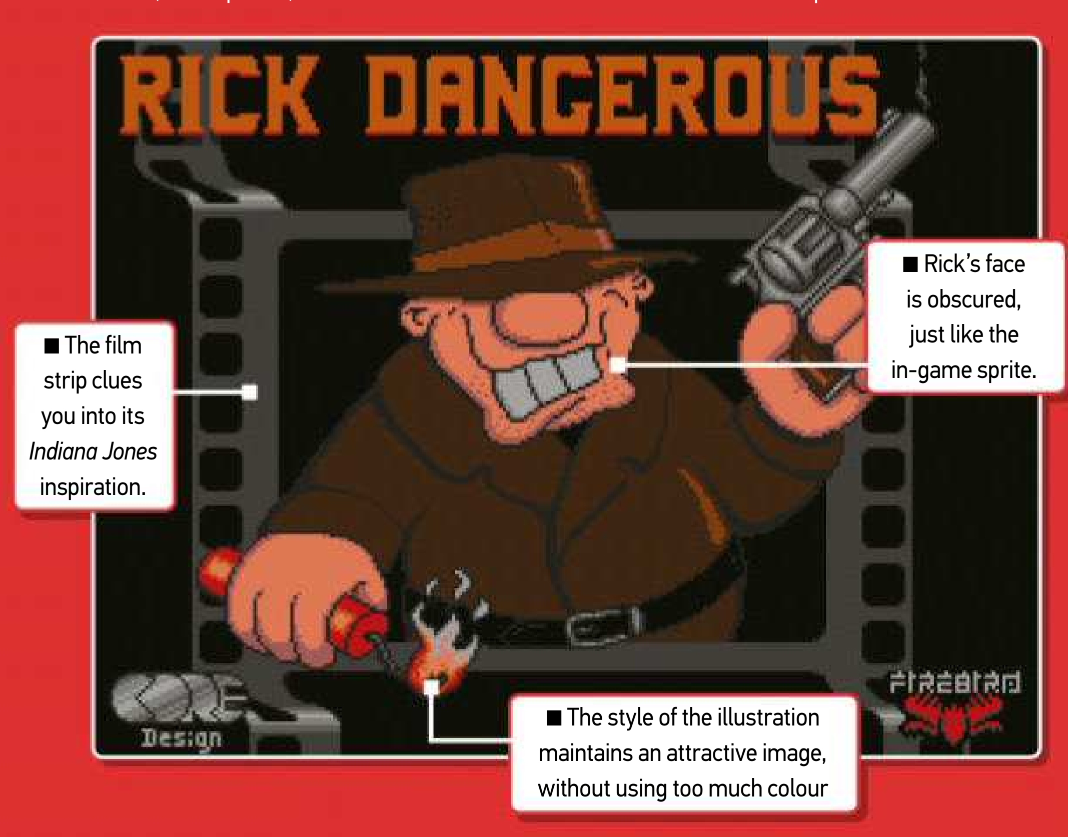
How the different 16-bit systems compared

ATARI ST

Low-resolution mode:
- 320x200 resolution (PAL and NTSC)
- Square pixels
- 16 colours from palette of 512 (four bitplanes)

Medium-resolution mode:
- 640x200 resolution (PAL and NTSC)
- Square pixels
- Four colours

High-resolution mode:
- 640x400 resolution (PAL and NTSC)
- Square pixels
- Monochrome
- Required dedicated monitor



- The film strip clues you into its *Indiana Jones* inspiration.
- Rick's face is obscured, just like the in-game sprite.
- The style of the illustration maintains an attractive image, without using too much colour



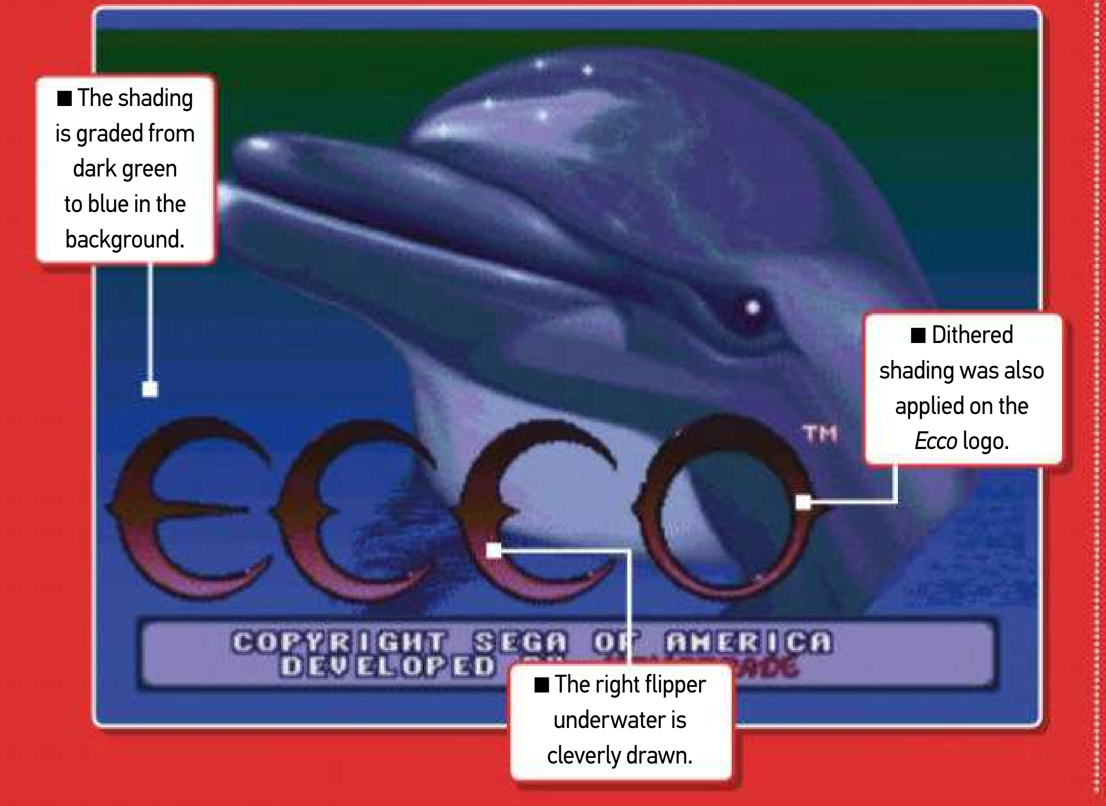
- The logo includes subtle shadows and highlights on the grenade.
- Notice the 'loading' message matches the in-game font.
- Textures create a convincing fire and smoke.

AMIGA

OCS (Original Chip Set) modes:
- 320x256 (PAL, without using overscan), 320x200 (NTSC, without overscan)
- Square pixels
- Up to 32 colours from palette of 4,096 (five bitplanes)
- Interlaced mode gives much higher resolution (640x512 in PAL).
- Copper coprocessor allows changes of graphic mode by splitting the screen.
- Overscan mode allows the picture to go into the borders, giving a larger screen area (up to 704x576 in PAL).
- HAM Mode (Hold And Modify) uses six bitplanes and can theoretically display all 4,096 colours on the screen at once.

MEGA DRIVE

Progressive (H40) mode:
- 320x240 (PAL), 320x224 (NTSC)
- Square pixels
- Up to 61 colours on the screen from a palette of 512
- Interlaced mode doubles the vertical resolution but reduces the number of sprites.
- Shadow/highlight mode and palette cycling (palettes are stored in four rows of 16) can increase the apparent number of colours.



- The shading is graded from dark green to blue in the background.
- Dithered shading was also applied on the *Ecco* logo.
- The right flipper underwater is cleverly drawn.



- Notice the bands of colour getting darker in the background.
- Another effective fire texture in the *SWIV* logo.
- Based on the computer game box art.

SUPER NINTENDO

Standard modes:
- 256x224 (PAL and NTSC)
- Square pixels
- Up to 256 colours (in theory per scanline) from palette of 32,768
- High resolution doubles the screen to 512x448, but is not available in all modes and its actual use in games is limited.
- Mode 7 allows up to 256 colours per background tile.
- Accessing video RAM can cause flickering, unless careful programming is used.

Q&A: STOO CAMBRIDGE

The Sensible Software artists on creating art and moving on to consoles

Did you create any logos that were particularly memorable to you?
One example is the logo for Hawk who published *The Executioner.* I was given a low-quality scan of their logo which I had to adjust, colour and correct, all in Deluxe Paint. I opted to use 64-colour Extra Half-Brite mode so I could retain the airbrush look of the original. Though not credited, I did create the small Sensible logo used on *Sensible Soccer* and later during the development of *Cannon Fodder* I created the big Sensible logo too.

Were you given any restrictions?
Feudal Lords, a medieval strategy game for Amiga and Atari ST, required a few mini-screens for triggered key events, these were only small. Out of the 16 colours available I could only use nine, so that was quite fun – and in ST-friendly colours, as it was being primarily developed on Atari and later ported to the Amiga.

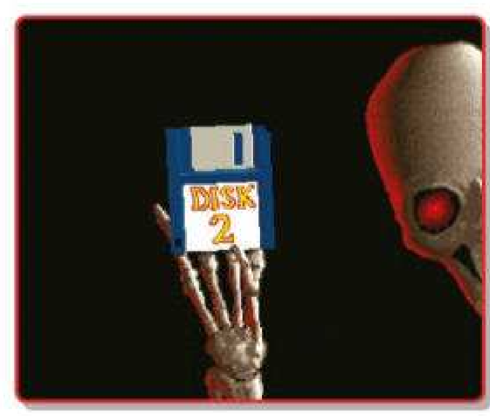
Did you work on any 16-bit consoles of the era?
I've worked on both Mega Drive and SNES, and absolutely loved them. We produced the Mega Drive conversion of *Mega Lo Mania* in-house so I got a good grounding on how the machine worked. The Amiga intro screens were drawn by Jo Walker in 32-colour mode and stored as a bitmap. This was totally incompatible with the Mega Drive, as everything is 8x8 tiles and Video RAM is quite tight. However it does have two 16-colour playfields which can be combined one on top of the other to give the illusion of having a 31-colour screen. (Colour 0 is transparent and used for the background colour.)

I split the colours on the original image down, then saved out two versions – one using the first 16 colours, the other using the second 16 colours. Once overlaid in the game the two images combined as one.



» [Mega Drive] Clever techniques allowed artists to make some really stunning loading screens.

» Simon Phipps (left) and Stoo Cambridge both created several memorable screens for the 16-bit systems.



» [Amiga] Artists often come up with clever solutions for disk swapping on the 16-bit computers.

▶ some becoming very familiar. The Psygnosis owl, the purple Team17, and the painted letters of Sensible Software became symbols of quality. "The world and his dog tried to outdo each other with a new and improved version of the Ocean logo, but I didn't bother about such things," Simon Butler laughs. "I was never a master of logo work, there were others better qualified than me." Jim reflects on a very different logo. "Some of the Commodore employees asked me to come up with the logo for the CD32 machine, but it turned out that others had already locked in the (very unfortunate) logo they ended up using."

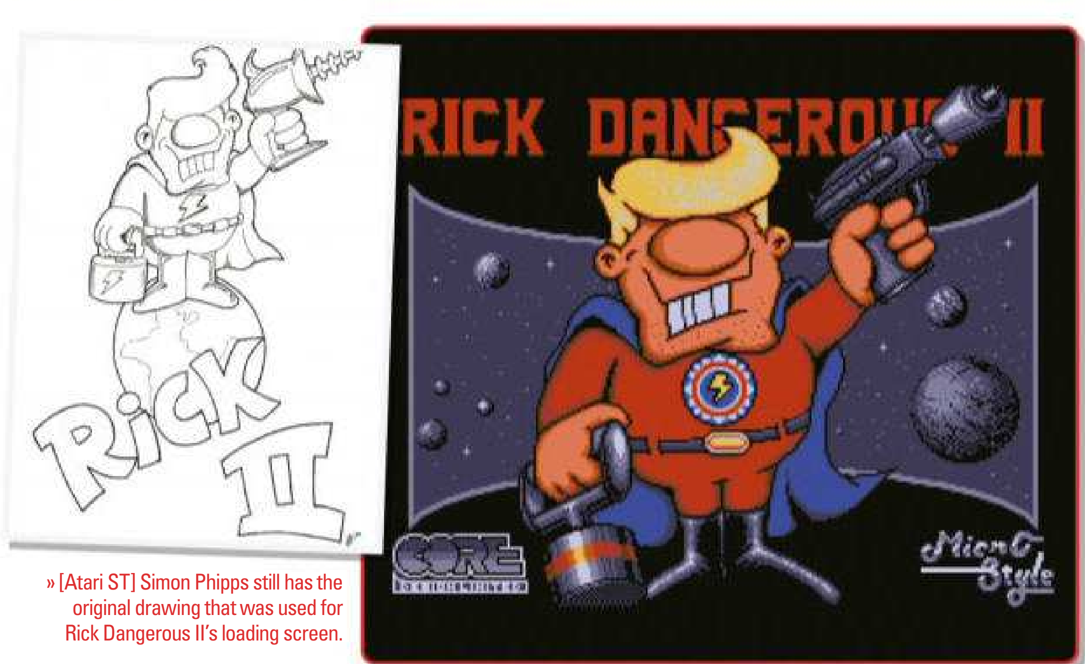
We should also pay tribute to the 'change disk' screen, a necessity as 16-bit games got bigger and covered multiple disks. One of the most memorable was the animated skeleton holding disk two for *Barbarian II*. Sensible sequel *Cannon Fodder 2* got a fantastic change disk picture by Stoo – based on the famous World War 1 recruitment poster featuring Lord Kitchener. He remembers another creation. "For *The Executioner* I also added the side of an Amiga A500, complete with blinking disk light, to show the disk going in."

Many games featured a series of static or animated screens as an introduction. Simon Phipps talks about the ones he created. "I did a series of animated comic book-style panels for *Switchblade* inspired by things that were appearing on the Master System at the time, a whole bunch of wild animated sequences for *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (which required me to write my own animated sequence player) and a full-on anime-inspired intro sequence for *Wolfchild* (which I got to redo for the Mega-CD release, since my drawing and animation had gotten better by then.)" Simon Butler is fond of one particularly kooky game intro. "I never did a sequence of screens but I did create the Thing hand opening sequence for the SNES *Addams Family* using the Amiga, which is something I am still moderately proud of. I worked from a series of still photographs of my own hand and basically drew very large frames of animation." Jim's best sequences included "*Ports of Call, Arazok's Tomb, Defender of the Crown I* and *Defender of the Crown II, Centurion, Ultrabots* (which was PC, but I did the animations on the Amiga), and several others."

Loading screens were not always a priority when it came to development, often created late in the process. Simon Phipps says, "The rush for game graphics to actually make the game pushes that back." He adds that most loading screens took a couple of days at that time. Simon Butler says, "I have worked on products where the title screen was done at the same time as the game graphics but by another artist. Full-screen work was therapeutic after tiles and animation, so they all brought a much-needed break from the 'norm' of game graphic development. I've never been particularly precious about my work. I achieved my goal or I didn't, it was as simple as that." Jim Sachs took "about a week" for each screen, although he adds, "I was usually given a list of artwork, and just started on whatever looked interesting."

Andrew wanted to make an impression with his loading screens. "They usually were seen as nonessential. I liked to do something significant as I thought they set the mood of the game. Where schedules intervened, I did the best I could in the time available." Stoo echoes the lack of time for loading screens during development. "It would have been nice to have spent some time on them as they were done at zero hour with little or no budget to pay for them. It varied depending on the level of urgency, but took no more than a day or so."

What were our interviewees' favourite or least favourite screens to create? "The title screen for *Saint & Greavsie's Football Trivia Quiz Game* wasn't exactly a highlight," Simon Phipps laments, before adding. "It was fun doing the art for *Rick Dangerous* and then going back for *Rick Dangerous 2* – if you look closely, the first one references old black and white cinema; the second one references Cinemascope."



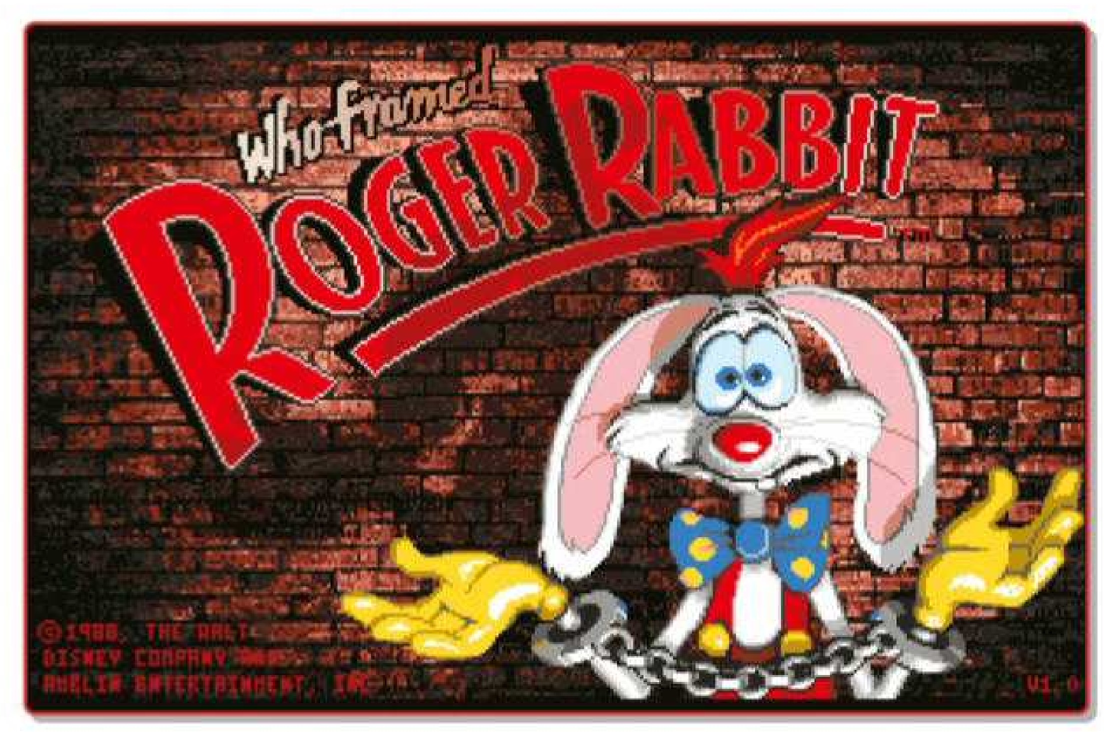
» [Atari ST] Simon Phipps still has the original drawing that was used for Rick Dangerous II's loading screen.

"Deluxe Paint was such a joy to work with that it was pointless to do anything else"
Simon Butler

"A lot of them were great fun," Jim says. "The *Amigaworld* special issue cover stands out, as does the *Defender Of The Crown* opening screen with the glittering gold letters. It was always fun when I felt like I was breaking new ground. One that I hated to work on was the *Roger Rabbit* screen. The movie wasn't out yet, and I didn't really know what the character was supposed to look like. All I could find was a stuffed doll, and my first few tries looked like a stuffed doll." Jim adds one final game. "The heart-breaking project that never went anywhere was my *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* game proposal for Disney. I spent years on that, doing artwork and animations, but Disney killed it."

Which other artists did they admire at the time? Simon Phipps pays tribute to a former colleague. "Kevin Bulmer – a really lovely guy who was super talented and who left us far too soon. I'm privileged to have known him and worked with him on a few things during those years." Simon Butler is short and to the point. "Dan Malone. No one else. His work at the Bitmaps was truly phenomenal." Jim chooses some different names. "There's Avril Harrison, who did the King Tut pic which was used on the Deluxe Paint cover. Jack Hager was the artist on the original Amiga development team, and did some fine work. Brad Schenk produced some fascinating Celtic designs on the Amiga." Andrew Morris is another fan of Dan Malone, and adds, "The Cinemaware games were also excellent as far as static screens go." And Stoo's shortlist includes Dan Malone, Jim Sachs, Henk Neiborg and Robin Levy.

In the age-old debate between Amiga and Atari ST, which did our artists prefer? Simon Phipps says, "Atari ST – by a mile. Everything I did was on the ST and ported as data to the Amiga." Simon Butler remembers switching allegiances. "My introduction to the 16-bit machines was with the ST, and while I did know its failings only too well, I liked it for what it was. Regardless of my knowing the Amiga was superior, at least from a graphics software point of view, it put my teeth on edge for some reason. The sound of the disk drive was something that drove me bonkers. I know it's petty but it was like a dripping tap, it got on my nerves. By the end of my 16-bit career I was firmly in the Amiga camp. Deluxe Paint was such a joy to work with that it was pointless to do anything else. I just had to tolerate the disk noises and get on with things." Andrew Morris states his preference. "The Amiga was better in every way, the ST was essentially an afterthought. With the exception of a couple of early games, everything was ported and sometimes downgraded for the ST's poorer spec." Jim is clear on the matter. "There was no contest -- nothing could beat the Amiga." And Stoo concludes, "Amiga without a shadow of a doubt." Whichever machine they worked on, we can look back at some amazing pixel work. *



» [Amiga] Jim Sachs created the title screen for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* from a toy.

COR(E), WHAT A LOGO

Simon Phipps says, "I designed the Core Design logo – it began as a series of circles with bits cut out of them, with the C having a knowing reference to Pacman"

01 Here are Simon's original design sketches (right). There are three variations here that look very close to the final logo that Core chose.





02 Here is an early Core Design logo from *Rick Dangerous* on the Atari ST.



03 And here is the logo as seen on the sequel, *Rick Dangerous 2*, also for the Atari ST.

04 Here is a customised logo for *Thunderhawk* on the Amiga, with the helicopter flying through it.



05 Simon Phipps adds, "Over the years it evolved until eventually it was redone using a font called 'Baby Teeth' which tightened up the logo for Core's remaining years." Here is that final logo, from *Bubba 'N' Stix* on the Mega Drive.

ULTIMATE GUIDE: Neo Drift Out New Technology

While other racing developers were driving down the new 3D route, Visco stuck to its old 2D roadmap and managed to arrive at a destination that was just as fun as any of its rivals. Join us for a look back at this Neo-Geo racing classic

Words by Nick Thorpe



» [Neo-Geo] Your codriver's instructions are only visible momentarily, so you'll have to remember tricky sequences like this.



» [Neo-Geo] What would a rally game be without some big, crazy jumps? Boring, that's what.

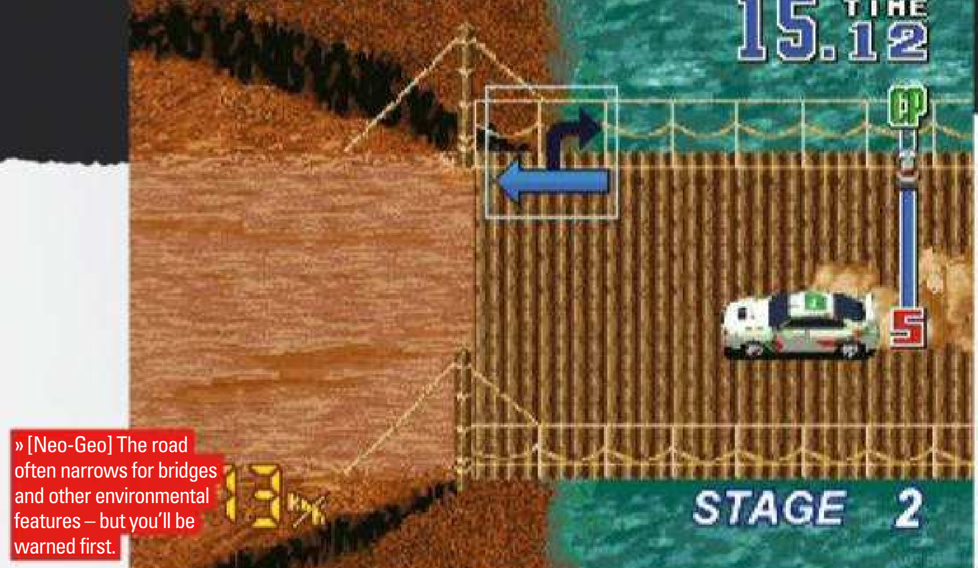


» [Neo-Geo] Although they're best avoided, water hazards are no big deal, they just slow you down a bit.

It's hard not to see *Neo Drift Out* as a bit of an anachronism. Of all the major gaming genres, racing always felt like the most simple and natural application of 3D graphics technology, and most arcade developers made the jump pretty quickly. By 1996, the genre already had a number of classic polygonal games – *Hard Drivin'*, *Virtua Racing*, *Ridge Racer* and *Sega Rally* all stand out – and Visco's rally game stood alone, as arguably the last great 2D racing game to hit the arcade.

Neo Drift Out is a simple game. You begin by picking one of three rally cars, all of which are automatic transmission, allowing for easy control. There are no championship standings and no rival racers to beat – the only goal is to get your car to the next checkpoint before your time expires. If you can do this over a short practice round and six main races, you win. Of course, as with any good rally





» [Neo-Geo] The road often narrows for bridges and other environmental features – but you'll be warned first.



» [Neo-Geo] Alternative routes are often blocked off by telltale barrels and cones, which are easily battered away.

» [Neo-Geo] When you're approaching an ice patch, you'll need to perform some extreme cornering to stay on the road.

game this is far from straightforward. You'll have to contend with jumps, ice patches, water hazards and other cars, and make crucial split-second decisions on whether or not to take alternate routes. At the end of each stage, you'll receive a letter grade ranking your completion time, giving you something to strive for.

In many respects, *Neo Drift Out* is a scaled-back update of *Drift Out 94: The Hard Order.* The older game is actually a more complex and comprehensive rally game – it offers many more licensed rally cars, plus more stages with more background details. Some of these are special stages, where you compete directly with another driver. There are tunnel sections, night stages, and you can even roll the car during a bad crash. Add to that an ongoing championship, and it starts to sound like the older game is the one we should be highlighting here.

But *Neo Drift Out* shows that simplicity can sometimes be a virtue in game design. Although the backgrounds don't have the variety of those in *Drift Out 94*, it's far easier to read upcoming turns – particularly as there are no more tunnels or night stages. It's clear to see that enjoyable track designs have been prioritised over visually accomplished ones – you'll never crash into a random truck in *Neo Drift Out*, nor will you lose sight of your car behind a tree. To compensate for some of the lost visual flair, the Neo-Geo's sprite scaling capability is used to great effect, pulling in closer on your car during corners and crashes, and tracks are kept exciting with greater use of diverging routes.

However, where *Neo Drift Out* really shows its superiority is in the actual driving experience. Handling is far more intuitive, with a little less oversteer required. Courses are wider meaning that crashes are less frequent, but they're also more forgiving in general and the roll crash has been removed completely, making for fewer ▶

CAR WARS

Though Neo Drift Out only features three cars, each could lay claim to rally dominance

TOYOTA CELICA

■ This powerful car dominated the early Nineties, and was the first Japanese model to be driven to World Rally Championship wins – by Carlos Sainz in 1990 and 1992, Juha Kankkunen in 1993 and Didier Auriol in 1994. The car also claimed the manufacturers championship in 1993 and 1994.



SUBARU IMPREZA

■ At the time of *Neo Drift Out*'s release, the distinctive blue-and-yellow Impreza was the reigning king of rally. The car claimed the first of three consecutive manufacturers championship wins for Subaru in 1995, and the late Colin McRae won his first and only drivers championship driving it.

MITSUBISHI LANCER EVOLUTION

■ After a second place manufacturers championship finish in 1995, Mitsubishi seemed poised for a breakthrough in 1996. That promise was thoroughly delivered on, as Tommi Mäkinen won the drivers championship for the first of four consecutive times – all of which were in the Evo.



MAKING TRACKS

As you'd expect, Neo Drift Out features a diverse range of racing courses – here's the complete rundown



PRACTICE STAGE

■ There's not a lot to this muddy introduction – just a few sharp turns to get you used to the game's controls. You'll blast through it in no time at all.



STAGE 1: EUROPEAN STAGE

■ The first of the main courses is a fairly gentle one, with minimal hazards, simple turn sequences and a friendly tarmac surface. You should beat it first time.



STAGE 2: AFRICAN STAGE

■ You'll be on dirt roads here, and water traps are the first major hazards that you will come across. Thankfully, they don't do much other than slow you down.



STAGE 3: SNOW LAND STAGE

■ This western European stage is another tarmac-based road, but this time with serious hazards in the form of big ice patches. The turn complexity jumps up here too.

RACING HERITAGE

Neo Drift Out was the last game in Visco's racing series – here's what came before

DRIFT OUT

ARCADE, 1991

■ The original *Drift Out* didn't actually have much influence on its arcade successors, other than the rally theme. Visco's game utilises a top-down perspective with a rotating race track, and employs a vertical monitor, so as to usefully show off as much of the road ahead as possible.





DRIFT OUT 94: THE HARD ORDER

ARCADE, 1994

■ Visco's second attempt at rally racing moves to the three-quarter perspective employed in *Neo Drift Out*, and features the series' most graphically detailed tracks – though these are hard to read at high speeds. It also featured a relatively expansive range of licensed cars.

SUPER DRIFT OUT

SNES, 1995

■ Instead of trying to adapt the more recent arcade sequel, *Super Drift Out*'s coders used Mode 7 to recreate the top-down rotating look of the first game in the series. This game was only released in Japan, as a planned North American version was never completed.



▶ frustrating moments where control of the car is completely lost. Where *Drift Out 94* is a stern test that will wear on the patience of even hardened players, *Neo Drift Out* allows you to take great joy in whipping your car round corners at silly speeds, often smashing some barrels as you do so, while your codriver issues forth orders (or if you're driving badly, hilariously shouts, "Oh my God!").

The difficulty is well pitched, too. After the easy initial stages which allow you to get to grips with the game, races are usually decided by razor-thin margins. You rarely ever cross the finish line with plenty of time to spare, but the same is true of failure – you're far more likely to have a near miss than be way off time, which makes dropping that next coin all the more enticing.

Neo *Drift Out* was released in the spring of 1996 in arcades, and followed to the Neo-Geo CD a few months later. It's more or less impossible to determine a critical consensus from the time, as the game largely escaped the attention of the English language games press due to the Neo-Geo's status as a minority format. The coverage the game received in Japanese magazines



» [Neo-Geo] Having a rival stick to you can be a pain, ruining your corners and slowing you down.



STAGE 4: SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE STAGE

■ You get to go back to the dirt roads here, but now with filthy great rocks in the road that will wipe out any unsuspecting driver. We would advise you to stay alert.



STAGE 5: SCANDINAVIAN STAGE

■ The snow here isn't your problem, so much as a combination of tough turns and the various hazards that have made things tough for you so far.



STAGE 6: GREAT BRITAIN

■ Your final challenge sees you return to the mud, with lots of jumps, plenty of rival cars and some devilish routes. If you can make it through, you win the game!

such as *Neo-Geo Freak* tended more towards guide content than reviews, too. However, the game is highly regarded by the Neo-Geo community – not only for its quality, but its genre. If you want a Neo-Geo racing game, the alternative options are *Over Top*, *Thrash Rally* and *Riding Hero*, a limited selection of games with none being generally considered better than *Neo Drift Out*.

Unfortunately, though it is pretty tame by the standards of Neo-Geo games in general, *Neo Drift Out* is now quite an expensive game to acquire. Recent eBay prices put the Neo-Geo MVS version at £85 and higher, although you can usually find better deals elsewhere if you are patient. The Neo-Geo CD copies seem to be in shorter supply than carts, and thus sell for even more. No official Neo-Geo AES version was released, and as a result the game is a popular target for unofficial 'conversions' – the transplantation of original arcade ROM chips into AES cartridges. These sell for a bit more than the arcade originals.

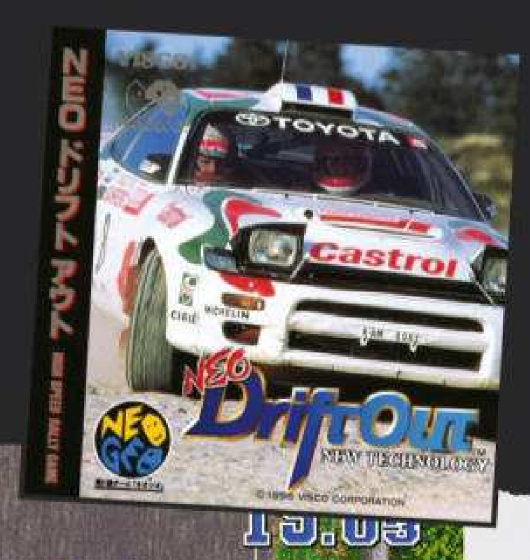
Sadly, the Neo-Geo versions are likely to be the only official versions that will ever exist. While Visco remains an active company that still has interest in licensing its games for new conversions, the need to negotiate licensing with three car manufacturers is a major obstacle in the way of any potential rerelease. However, all that shouldn't get in your way of enjoying *Neo Drift Out*, because the truth is that they really *don't* make them like they used to. The lack of official and unofficial successors means that there's nothing quite like it available today, and that's a great shame because it's still an absolute blast. *

"The game is highly regarded by the Neo-Geo community"



» [Neo-Geo] This victory scene awaits, providing you can successfully finish all six stages.





CD STAGE

How does the only home conversion of Neo Drift Out stack up against the arcade game?

If you wanted to play *Neo Drift Out* from the comfort of your home, the only official way to do it was to pick up a copy of the Neo-Geo CD version, which was only released in Japan. The good news is that if you did so, you were treated to an excellent version of the game.

Being very similar to the arcade hardware, the Neo-Geo CD is capable of hosting an almost exact replica of the home game, and it does so. There are some very minor graphical differences to be found – the title screen has been revamped slightly, as have some of the intermission scenes and direction graphics – but generally, it's a like-for-like replica. There's a CD audio soundtrack which features the same tunes as the cartridge game – they might be slightly cleaner, but it's hard to detect under the engine noise. Beyond the ability to choose your difficulty level, there's nothing in the way of options to speak of either.

The Neo-Geo CD is famous for its frequent and lengthy loading pauses, which can be ruinous in some games. Thankfully, *Neo Drift Out* isn't afflicted badly at all. There's an 18-second wait after picking your car and most loading times are pretty short and tolerable after that, with subsequent races taking up to 12 seconds to load. What's more, those are times are measured on a regular console – if you're lucky enough to be using a Neo-Geo CDZ, you can cut them in half.







ESSENTIAL ACCESSORY
AV Cable

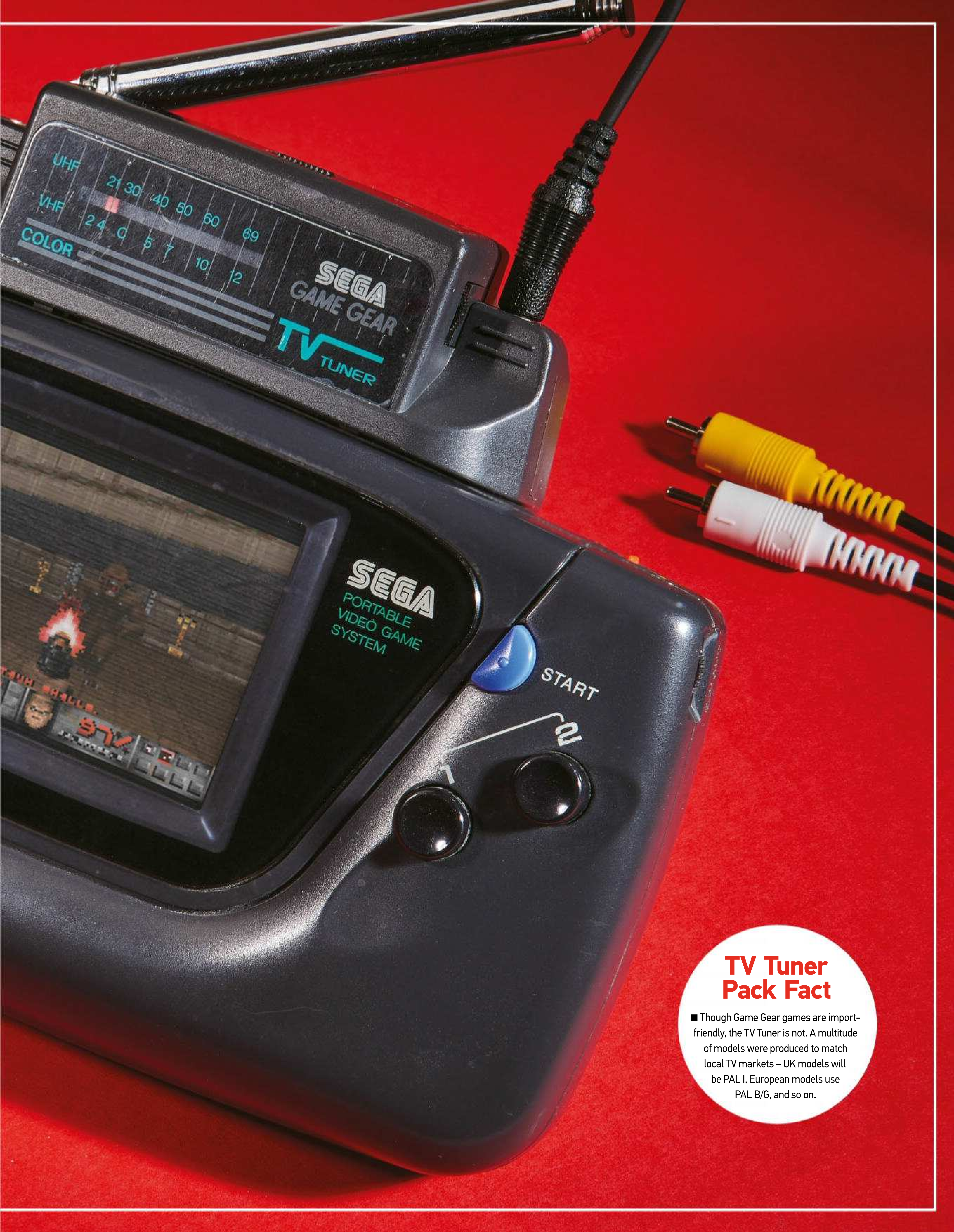
This little cable plugs into the TV Tuner Pack to allow playback of any appropriate composite video source on the Game Gear. As a result, it's still possible for you to use your Game Gear as a monitor to display other standard definition consoles, DVDs and more. This might seem like a redundant and somewhat odd thing to do given that you can watch Netflix on your phone, but if you're stuck in an area with no data coverage, we're sure you'll be longing for a Game Gear to watch your VHS tapes on. Then again, maybe that's just us.

TV Tuner Pack

» **PLATFORM:** GAME GEAR » **RELEASED:** 1991 » **COST:** £74.99 (LAUNCH), £3+ (NOW)

Sega was always looking for ways to tout the superiority of the Game Gear's colour display over the Game Boy's greyscale screen, and the TV Tuner Pack was one of the most audacious – and convincing. Although the development of LCD displays had impacted handheld colour TV set design by the early Nineties, they were still expensive devices – the starting price was £100, and screen sizes didn't start to compare to the Game Gear's 3.2-inch LCD until you went further up the price range. With the TV Tuner Pack, you could carry one device that did both games and TV, at a significant discount. Of course the device did have its drawbacks, most notably in increasing the Game Gear's already-impressive appetite for batteries. A revised version of this peripheral, the TV Auto Tuner Pack, was later released in Japan only. As the name suggests, it features automatic channel tuning instead of the manual dial of the original.

For many years, the TV Tuner Pack was one of the Game Gear's most desirable accessories. However, with digital switchover having now been completed, it's impossible to find an analogue signal to tune into, making the device next to useless. However, it isn't *quite* obsolete.



TV Tuner Pack Fact

■ Though Game Gear games are import-friendly, the TV Tuner is not. A multitude of models were produced to match local TV markets – UK models will be PAL I, European models use PAL B/G, and so on.

TEAM17

THERE AND BACK

To celebrate the release of its 100th game, Retro Gamer explores how Team17 went from a prolific developer and publisher to a single-franchise developer – and how it managed to come back stronger than before

Words by Nick Thorpe

If you stop to think about it, 100 games is a pretty big number. Entire platforms have lived and died without hosting that many – even ones from the likes of Atari, Sega and Nintendo – and companies have become legendary without even getting halfway there. That's what makes *Planet Alpha* a landmark for Team17, as the platform adventure game is the 100th game to have come from the Yorkshire-based company since it was formed in late 1990. In that time, the company has gone from developing and publishing games to solely developing them, and then come back round to its roots by resuming publishing business.

Prior to the formation of Team17 in December 1990, 17-Bit Software existed as a public domain software supplier for the Amiga, headed up by entrepreneur Michael Robinson – also owner of Microbyte, a computer retailer. As the next step it was suggested that 17-Bit Software should become a full publisher, with an in-house development team formed from Swedish developer Team 7, consisting of Andreas Tadic, Rico Holmes and Peter Tuleby. Martyn Brown of 17-Bit Software became part of the newly merged business as project manager, while Microbyte sales manager Debbie Bestwick was assigned to perform commercial support for the newly-formed Team17.

The first game from the new self-publishing developer was *Full Contact*, a one-on-one fighting game released in 1991. It's fair to say that in the early days, planning was a bit looser than it is today. "We chose a beat-'em-up as our first game, for no other reason than we thought it would sell well," explains Debbie, now CEO of Team17. "We



» [Amiga] Team17 purposely released *Full Contact* at a budget price in order to leave a good impression on Amiga owners.

AGAIN

decided to launch it as a budget-price game despite it being the quality of a full-price game at that time. It was all part of the launch plan to get us known overnight here in the UK (that was our entire marketing strategy and launch plan – don't try that today fellow developers)."

Risky though it was, the plan worked. *Full Contact* scored 80% from *CU Amiga* and 86% from *Amiga Format*, both of which labelled the game "a steal" for its low price. "I still remember the folks at WH Smith calling me to say we had been its number one that first week, and a day or so later the official chart came out and we were the UK Number 1," recalls Debbie. "I've still got a memento of *Full Contact* in a picture frame on my desk because it's very important to me to remember our roots, where we've come from and just how far."

The top-down shoot-'em-up *Alien Breed* was next, and scored well with the press including a 5/5 review from *Games-X*, 91% from *Zero* and 90% from *CU Amiga*. 1992 was also a good year for Team17 – the shoot-'em-up *Project X* released to critical acclaim, and the company picked up Psionic Systems' *Assassin* as its first game from an external studio. To cap off the year, the budget-price release *Alien Breed: Special Edition* added extra levels and reworked maps to the original game to huge success, sticking around the charts for over a year. In 1993 the company's output picked up as it published games from five different external developers as well as four in-house projects.

By this point, Team17 had earned a formidable reputation amongst



» [Amiga] *Alien Breed* takes the design of *Gauntlet*, but adds an *Aliens* theme.

A CENTURY NOT OUT

Here's the full rundown of Team17 games, from 1991 to the present day

1991 **FULL CONTACT**
ALIEN BREED

1992 **PROJECT X**



ASSASSIN
ALIEN BREED: SPECIAL EDITION

1993 BODY BLOWS
SUPERFROG
PROJECT X: SPECIAL EDITION
F17 CHALLENGE



THE GENERAL'S DEBRIEF

Kevin Carthew, creative director at Team17, talks about the company's iconic series, Worms



When did you first encounter the *Worms* games, and what did you think of them?

I was 15 years old, and my friends and I were all huge Amiga nerds. They were talking about this amazing new game that was only available on the Amiga. It was 1995, the same year that the PlayStation launched. Cool new games that were also Amiga exclusives just didn't happen anymore. They said it was something like a cross between Lemmings and Scorched Tanks, that was a pretty accurate description. It only took a couple of rounds to get hooked and see that it was something special. Three or four of us played it together regularly, and when the Worms: The Director's Cut released a year or so later we played that too.

Why do you think that the *Worms* series has remained so popular for over 20 years?

I think it's partly to do with the Worms character and partly to do with the mix of action and strategy in the gameplay. I've met plenty of people over the years who've never held a controller before but still know Worms from the character alone. There's something about the combination of high pitched squeaky voices, cartoon animation and deadly explosions that cuts across all sorts of demographics and has genuine mass appeal.

The gameplay has that same mass appeal with a nice blend of action and strategy. Worms has also always been hugely configurable, so all skill levels are able to enjoy it. If you're a skilful player, the game has a surprising amount of depth in both strategy and dexterity. If you're a casual player, there's lots to enjoy with satisfying explosions, funny characterisations, and chain reactions of events that play out in all sorts of unforeseen ways. In every version of the game there's always been something that appeals to every type of gamer.

***Worms* is Team17's most prolific and easily identifiable series – what are the pressures and benefits that come with that?**

There's a large fanbase of gamers who remember a classic version of the game, rediscover a new version, and want to check in and see what's new. It has also found new fans on platforms like iOS and Android.

The main pressure on us is often trying to create a certain look and feel with each new version. That always turns out to be harder than most people would expect. As well as that, we're always trying to bring something new to the game; something that evolves the gameplay but doesn't break it.

What do you think the future holds for the series?

Watch this space!

Other than the *Worms* games, what are your favourite Team17 games from over the years?

I'll always have a soft spot for Superfrog, I just love that character; his smug little pose always brings a smile to my face. I also think all our recent output has been high quality. Worms WMD, The Escapists 2 and Overcooked 2 are all high-quality polished games that I'm proud to have been a part of.

» [Amiga] *Qwak* was originally released on 8-bit systems, but Jamie Woodhouse's Amiga update is our favourite.



"THE JOURNEY OF WORMS WAS AN EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER FOR LOTS OF PEOPLE"

Debbie Bestwick

Amiga fans. "I think because they were focused on Amiga exclusives, they really knew how to make the hardware sing," says Ashley Day, a long-time Team17 fan who joined the company in August 2017 as senior community manager. "Team17's Amiga games looked and sounded fantastic, and many like *Full Contact* and *Superfrog* came with these incredible intro sequences that really showed off what the computer could do." One space in particular that Team17 came to make its own was arcade-style games. "Even when some coin-op conversions didn't live up to the hype, Team17 were there with their own arcade-quality hits to fill the gap," says Ashley. "*Project X* was their *Gradius*; *Assassin* their *Strider* and *Body Blows* their *Street Fighter*."

It was in 1995, as the Amiga market was winding down, that Team17 found the game that it would become most associated with. Andy Davidson, the original designer of *Worms*, took the concept to Team17 at the European Computer Trade Show in 1994. Team17 offered help in developing the game, and it launched to high praise from the Amiga press in late 1995. "I remember playing it on a friend's Amiga," recalls Ashley. "We stayed up all night mastering the artillery gameplay and making custom levels in Deluxe Paint. I thought it was like nothing I'd ever played before and immediately started nagging my grandfather, a fellow computer enthusiast, for an Amiga of my own so I could play it every day."

Of course, when you open up a can of worms, they quickly get everywhere – and that's exactly what happened with *Worms*. The popularity of the game meant that it couldn't stay confined to the Amiga, so with Ocean as a publishing partner, Team17 took its first steps outside of the computer market. *Worms* came to the 16-bit and 32-bit consoles as well as the Game Boy in 1996 and even though the company had a string of Amiga hits, this was massive on a different scale. It sold well on all platforms and won a number of awards in the process. "The journey of *Worms* was an emotional rollercoaster for lots of people and I think most studios/teams who have similar success will say the same," says Debbie. "It's been a major catalyst of our success. *Worms* gave Team17 the solid foundations, wisdom and knowledge to become what we are today with our label." Unsurprisingly, Debbie considers it one of her favourite Team17 games, as she has enjoyed "from first playing it to seeing it become the iconic gaming franchise it is today."

Despite the multiformat success of *Worms*, Team17 remained committed to



» An earlier shot of the *Worms Forts: Under Siege* team, posing outside the old Team17 building in Ossett.



» [Amiga] Many fans consider *Alien Breed: Tower Assault* to be the best game in the series.

producing Amiga games for a little longer. "Team17 stuck around much longer than most publishers – and even longer than anyone could have rightfully expected – and kept pushing the boundaries of what the hardware could do," remembers Ashley. "*Alien Breed 3D*, for example, was the Amiga's answer to *Doom* and arguably exceeded it in certain ways. It's incredible what Andy Clitheroe and the rest of the team pulled off with that game." That game was released in 1996, and Team17 continued to serve Amiga owners throughout the year – *Alien Breed 3D* got a sequel, and the company also published the *Zelda*-style adventure *The Speris Legacy*.

However, the Amiga couldn't last forever and Team17 had to bid the format farewell in 1997 with the release of *Worms: The Directors Cut*. The transition away from the format was primarily towards the PC, with the PlayStation exclusive *Project X* sequel *X2* being a notable exception. At this point, the company's primary publishing partner was Microprose and it was mixing original projects like *Phoenix* and *Addiction Pinball* with *Worms* sequels. Although it still occasionally worked with external developers (such as on *Nightlong: Union City Conspiracy*), Team17's publishing roots had faded away. As a result, the output of the once-prolific company had slowed down to just two or three games per year, and the early part of the new millennium saw even fewer games from Team17.

"We started as a publisher with over 20 games in the first four years and then we created *Worms* solely for over a decade, living from milestone payments from publishers," recalls Debbie. "I won't lie, it was tough." In the first half of the Noughties, Team17 released precisely one game that wasn't a *Worms* game – *Stunt GP*, a racing game which launched on PC and consoles to a muted reception. It was the last time that the company would work on a brand-new property for over ten years, as growing development budgets meant that the games industry became increasingly risk averse. Having seen the success of the previous games in the *Worms* series, publishers wanted sequels to *Worms* – and while 3D graphics were already in the home when the original arrived, they were a regular audience expectation by this time. This resulted in the creation of *Worms 3D*, *Worms Forts*: *Under Siege* and *Worms 4: Mayhem*. *Even* when the company tried to create a racing game, it was conceived as a *Worms* spin-off (which was ultimately cancelled).

In the latter half of the decade, Team17 returned to 2D *Worms* games with the well-received *Worms: Open Warfare* series on portable consoles. ▶



» [Amiga CD32] *Ultimate Body Blows* was an enhanced update of the first two games.



» Debbie Bestwick is CEO of Team17 and has been at the company since its inception.

QWAK
CARDIAXX
OVERDRIVE
ALIEN BREED 2
SILVERBALL
1994 **BODY BLOWS GALACTIC**
APACHE
ASSASSIN: SPECIAL EDITION
ARCADE POOL
APIDYA
SUPER STARDUST
ALIEN BREED: TOWER ASSAULT
1995 ULTIMATE BODY BLOWS
ATR – ALL TERRAIN RACING
KINGPIN – ARCADE SPORTS BOWLING
WORMS
1995 ALIEN BREED 3D
WORMS REINFORCEMENTS
THE SPERIS LEGACY
WORLD RALLY FEVER
ALIEN BREED 3D II: THE KILLING GROUNDS
X2
1997 WORMS: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT
WORMS 2
1998 ADDICTION PINBALL
NIGHTLONG: UNION CITY CONSPIRACY
1999 ARCADE POOL II
WORMS ARMAGEDDON
PHOENIX
2001 **WORMS WORLD PARTY**
STUNT GP



2002 **WORMS BLAST**
WORMS FOR SKY DIGITAL



A BREED APART

John Eggett, lead designer of the Alien Breed revival, discusses the sci-fi shooter series



When did you first encounter the original *Alien Breed* games, and what did you think of them?
I played the first *Alien Breed* before starting at Team17, I recall it was one of the few games that had speech, 'Welcome to Intex systems' when you accessed the console. I loved the film *Aliens* and this was the nearest thing I could get to fighting them back then. I remember the later levels became very difficult. Games were tough back in 1991… wow, that's almost 30 years ago.

Pleasing old fans while appealing to new players is always difficult with series revivals like the modern *Alien Breed* games. How did you approach this challenge?
One aspect I wanted to improve on was to surprise the player more and how the aliens fought the player. We used a mechanic where aliens would burst out of the floors and walls often in front and behind the player and used alien types to work together opposed to simply making a *Gauntlet*-like beeline to the player.

What were you most pleased with in the more modern *Alien Breed* games?
That aliens would break out of the floors and walls keeping the player on their toes – just because you can't see them, doesn't mean they aren't in the walls waiting to ambush. They would often work together, with shield aliens moving in front protecting ranged aliens, and aliens that could heal staying at the back. (Always kill the healers first!)

It's been a little while since we've seen *Alien Breed* – what are the chances of it returning in the future?
Who knows what's out there in the deep reaches of space!

Other than the *Alien Breed* games, what are your favourite Team17 games from over the years?
While we're on the *Alien Breed* topic, I thought the 3D versions (*Alien Breed 3D* and *Killing Grounds*) were technical masterpieces. They had maps with varying depths, floors above each other. Something not even the mighty *Doom* could do at the time. Remember this was 1995 and on the Amiga! Other games I'm fond of are the *Worms* series (specifically *Worms World Party* and *Worms WMD*) and the *Lemmings* ports we did for Sony. A recent game we published that I enjoyed playing is *Mugsters*.



"WE'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN BEING AGILE AND MOVING FAST ON NEW PLATFORMS"
Debbie Bestwick

▶ Additionally, the company occasionally took on projects in established series for other publishers, with mixed results. The PSP version of *Lemmings* was rather good and a PS3 conversion soon followed, but the PS2 game *Army Men: Major Malfunction* was met with negative reviews in 2006. In 2009, *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust* lived up to its name – the project was dropped by its original publisher Activision, and although it was picked up later by Codemasters the game suffered an exceptionally poor reception despite having the series' biggest budget to date.

Fortunately, tech advances didn't just mean bigger games with bigger budgets. "We have always believed in being agile and moving fast on new platforms and new opportunities," notes Debbie. "Back in the early Noughties we were publishing on mobile, exploring digital publishing and learned a lot during this period which stood us in good stead for the present landscape!" Looking back, it's clear to see that the company was looking beyond the standard market of making boxed console and PC games. Team17 created a version of *Worms* for Sky Digital's interactive TV services in 2002, and partnered with Korean developer Wizgate to create *OnlineWorms*, an online-only adaptation targeted at the Asian market. In 2007, Team17 released *Worms* for Xbox 360 via Xbox Live Arcade, and it became one of the console's bestselling downloadable games.

By the end of the decade, Team17 had refocused. In 2009, it returned to its original model of publishing its own internally developed games, and revived *Alien Breed* for an all-new downloadable game, which received two sequels in 2010. That same year, Martyn Brown told *MCV* that the company had "no ambition to return to retail publishing". It was a big change, but one which didn't actually stick – thanks to a deal with Mastertronic, both *Alien Breed Trilogy* and *Worms: The Revolution Collection* were released on disc, so players saw no ill effects. However, one big change did stick soon afterwards – in 2011 a management buyout saw Debbie take full control of the company, with Martyn Brown and Michael Robinson departing.

"Turning Team17 around from when I took full control has to be high up the list," Debbie replies when asked about her favourite memories from over the years. "It was a difficult time initially, I was equally learning on the job in terms of running a business but seeing the company and people flourish has



» [GameCube] *Worms*' foray into 3D gaming was ill-fated and the series has since switched back to 2D design.

been insanely rewarding." Much of the turnaround can be attributed to Team17's return to publishing – the company is using its experience and visibility in the digital marketplace to publish games from a variety of developers, going back to its roots in the Amiga days. Much of Team17's approach to this endeavour has been shaped by the company's own experience with external publishers. "With our games label, I've made a very conscious decision to build the kind of publisher that would do everything that others wouldn't. The first question I ask any potential partners is what their vision is, because it's something that no publishers cared about in our past yet it's so fundamentally important," Debbie tells us. "I want to see their passion and drive and help them to become a sustainable business so that we're not just talking to them about their debut game, but we're doing our best to ensure they'll still be making games ten years down the line."

Changes were slow to show after the management buyout, as *Worms* games were still the majority of Team17's output from 2011-2013 – after all, it remains a profitable series, and one which Team17 may not have survived without. This is something that Debbie points out ▶

» [Xbox 360] *Alien Breed* was updated in 2009 and originally released as a digital-only game.









THE ESCAPE ARTIST

Chris Davis of Mouldy Toof Studios talks Team17 and the retro DNA of The Escapists



What were your favourite Team17 games prior to *The Escapists*?

Growing up back in the Nineties, one of my friends was into Amiga, so I would swindle a quick go on *Alien Breed* now and then. I wasn't fully exposed to Team17 games until I played *Worms* on my Mega Drive. It was great – a must-have multiplayer classic.

Why did you feel Team17 was the right publisher for *The Escapists*?

I wasn't really thinking about or expecting any publisher interest at the time I was working on *The Escapists*. It was just a little idea at first and I didn't see it as something that'd appeal to a greater audience. Others thought differently, though, and proved me wrong. Those who have played *The Escapists* know it has that cheeky, British humour vibe about it, which is something that seems to resonate with Team17 particularly.

Besides the obvious pixel art style, we see a lot of retro appeal in *The Escapists*, along the lines of *The Great Escape* and *Skool Daze*. To what extent were you influenced by older games?

I never played *The Great Escape*, but *Skool Daze* and its sequel were some of my earliest gaming memories. It was those in particular that influenced the day to day routines that form the basis of *The Escapists*. I guess I was subconsciously trying to recreate something that I'd have loved playing as a child. It seems to have worked as the game was very popular with the younger audience.

You've had some real success with *The Escapists*, including a sequel and a tie-in with *The Walking Dead*. Where do you think things will go next?

At the moment I am still dabbling in prototypes and projects looking for 'the next idea'. I did the same thing to land on the concept for *The Escapists*, so we will see where it leads.

Other than *The Escapists* series, what are your favourite Team17 games from over the years?

I'm still trying to dip into them all – my backlog is huge. But I'm going to have to give the nod to *Overcooked*, it's a simple but great idea executed perfectly. I'm not great at it but seeing a four-player game abscond into chaos entertains me!

2003 **WORMS 3D**
2004 WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE
2005 **WORMS 4: MAYHEM**
2006 WORMS OPEN WARFARE
LEMMINGS (PSP)



ARMY MEN: MAJOR MALFUNCTION
2007 **LEMMINGS (PS3)**
WORMS (XBLA/PSN/IOS)
WORMS OPEN WARFARE 2
2008 WORMS: A SPACE ODDITY
2009 **LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST**
WORMS 2: ARMAGEDDON
ALIEN BREED: EVOLUTION
2010 WORMS RELOADED
ALIEN BREED 2: ASSAULT
WORMS: BATTLE ISLANDS
ALIEN BREED 3: DESCENT
2011 WORMS ULTIMATE MAYHEM
WORMS CRAZY GOLF
2012 WORMS FOR FACEBOOK
WORMS REVOLUTION
2013 ALIEN BREED (REMASTER)
SUPERFROG HD



WORMS CLAN WARS
WORMS 3
2014 WORMS BATTLEGROUNDS
FLOCKERS



» [PC] Mugsters is one of Team17's more recent releases and is developed by Reinkout Games.



NUMBER 100

Planet Alpha is Team17's 100th game – find out what it is, and how the company is celebrating

The 100th game to be released by Team17 is one that reflects the company's current philosophy well. *Planet Alpha* is a puzzle platformer with stealth elements, in which the player must survive while exploring an world beset by robot soldiers. If that sounds familiar to you, that's because there are parallels that can be drawn between *Planet Alpha* and the classic *Another World* – but while *Planet Alpha* has similarly striking visuals and a preference for visual storytelling, it also has features like the ability to switch between day and night. It was developed by a small team, Planet Alpha Game Studios, with a core of just three people.

The release of the 100th Team17 game is something Debbie has been looking forward to for some time. "I've been keeping an eye out for this to be honest, we knew that *Yooka-Laylee* marked our 90th release last year. I knew it was going to happen this year at some point," she explains. "We intentionally didn't let it change what releases where coming in what order and it was only when I sat down with Ashley I realised it was going to be *Planet Alpha*. I also didn't tell Adrian Lazar, the *Planet Alpha* studio boss, until a few weeks before the game launch to help keep the pressure away. Forever, no matter what any of us do in future lives, this will remain a special memory for Adrian, his team and all at Team17!"

"A while before I started at Team17 I'd seen Debbie counting down to release 100 on her personal LinkedIn page, so when I joined I expressed an interest in helping to celebrate the landmark," Ashley adds. "As a fan, how could I not? Debbie and I worked together on the official list and when we realised that *Planet Alpha* – a special and beautiful game that I think lives up to the hardware-pushing ethos of our Amiga days – was game 100, we just knew we had to mark the occasion. It's been great fun putting those old **Retro Gamer** skills to work by helping to make retrospective content, and I encourage **RG** readers to check out Team17's social channels for retro treats through the rest of 2018."

Planet Alpha is available for PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch and is out now.



» [PC] *Planet Alpha* marks Team17's 100th game, an impressive achievement by any company's standards.

> "WE'LL ALWAYS BE LOOKING FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES, TRENDS AND IDEAS TO EMBRACE"
> Debbie Bestwick

as another key way in which the company differs from other publishers. "As a standard rule of thumb, our label partners retain control and ownership of their IP. It's one thing we would impart to any independent studio, whatever their position. We say that it's the 'lifeblood' of any developer." However, 2014 marked a turning point. Seven games were released that year, making it the company's biggest year since 1994, and only one was a *Worms* game. This approach has continued, as the company is now less reliant on a single series, but the games still fit the company's overall identity. "Overall, I'd like to think that our sense of humour and character generally shows through with each game," says Debbie in explaining that identity. "And I hope that people take a game released by Team17 as a sign of quality."

One of the interesting things about Team17 today is that while it has retained much of its identity from the Amiga days, with near three decades in business it now has a retro appeal, which is something that Debbie is keen to embrace. "Nostalgia is a powerful thing isn't it? It's exciting because we still have a generation of gamers playing the contemporary titles who have fond memories of the 8-bit and 16-bit era and are happy to go back to these experiences," she notes. "This is really the first decade where we have had this isn't it? I don't recall PlayStation or PS2 gamers hankering for ZX81 titles!"



» The Team17 staff of 2017 happily pose outside their new offices. The company went public earlier this year.

The result is that Team17 has worked a number of games with retro appeal into its line-up, alongside original concepts. *Superfrog HD* and the mobile release of *Alien Breed* draw upon Team17's own history, while *Yooka-Laylee* saw a team that created some of the N64's most beloved platform games returning to the genre. Other games have less direct ties to older games, but still carry nostalgic appeal. "I can remember when I first saw *The Escapists* at EGX Rezzed 2014. I thought "This is an Amiga game!" Not just in its pixel graphics but also its gleefully oblique game design," Ashley recalls. "I thought it was wonderful that the company could produce something so in tune with its roots while also completely new at the same time." Another game he points out as a favourite is the throwback beat-'em-up *Raging Justice*. "It harks back to some of our earliest games like *Full Contact* and *Body Blows* (we even talked about sneaking a *Body Blows* character in there at one point) but developer MakinGames has also brought new ideas to the table, like the arrest mechanic."

Recent years have seen Team17's new approach bear fruit in the form of



» [PC] Team17 teamed up with Playtonic Games to bring the retro-style 3D platformer *Yooka-Laylee*.

some big hits, which have resulted in some amazing personal journeys for the developers involved – another thing Debbie highlights as a favourite aspect of her career at Team17. "So, to see people like Chris Davis, go from being a roofer to being named as a BAFTA Breakthrough Brit and *The Escapists* having sold several millions," she offers as an example. "The same seeing Phil Duncan and Oli De-Vine from Ghost Town Games collect their Best British Game and Best Family Game awards for *Overcooked* at the BAFTAs. I think I had as many tears in my eyes as Phil's wife and Oli's girlfriend did! It's an incredible journey we are all on together." Team17 has done very well – it went public this year, being listed on the stock market for the first time, and posted a strong first set of financial results following the initial public offering.

"There have been changes as we have moved through a few generations of games systems that Team17 has developed on," Debbie reflects when asked about the changes that the company has gone through over the course of releasing 100 games. "There are the obvious changes that many businesses undertake such as expansion and personnel coming and going (proud to say we still have employees who have been with us from the start also) and there are the not so obvious changes in our return to third party publishing, using the expertise and experience to approach this in our own way." However, some things stay the same. "We still have a strong belief in people power and we bring our employees (or teamsters as they are referred to internally) up through the ranks. Both our production and creative directors started in QA here, for example," Debbie says.

"We've always believed in being agile and moving fast on new platforms and new opportunities," Debbie reiterates. "This won't change either – we'll always be looking for new opportunities, trends and ideas to embrace."

Debbie's description of the Team17 journey is an apt one – the company has clearly had distinct phases of good times and troubled times. But Team17 has recaptured the ethos that made it such a dominant force in the Amiga games market, concentrating on its strengths and offering breadth of genre coverage through well-chosen partnerships. As a result, the company has reached a number of releases that's worth celebrating by anyone's standards, reached new heights of success and has a positive outlook for the future. With that in mind, we can only imagine that you'll see a feature celebrating Team17's 200th game in **Retro Gamer** one day – and if that next batch happens to include an *Alien Breed* game or two, you certainly won't hear any complaints from us. *



» [PC] The sequel to the BAFTA-winning *Overcooked* ups the chaotic kitchen action.



» Ashley Day is now senior community manager at Team17, and has previously appeared in **Retro Gamer** as a freelance writer.

LIGHT
OVERRULED!
SCHRODINGER'S CAT AND THE RAIDERS OF THE LOST QUARK
HAY EWE
REVOLVE
2015 **THE ESCAPISTS**
LA COPS
WORMS WORLD PARTY REMASTERED
BEYOND EYES
SHELTERED
THE ESCAPISTS: THE WALKING DEAD
PENARIUM
WORMS 4
2016 **OLLIOLLI 2: XL EDITION**
NOT A HERO: SUPER SNAZZY EDITION
10 MINUTE TOWER
OVERCOOKED
WORMS WMD
LETHAL VR
2017 **YOOKA-LAYLEE**
AVEN COLONY
INTERPLANETARY: ENHANCED EDITION
THE ESCAPISTS 2
2018 **FORGED BATTALION**
MY TIME AT PORTIA
RAGING JUSTICE
YOKU'S ISLAND EXPRESS



MUGSTERS
OVERCOOKED 2
SWORD LEGACY: OMEN
PLANET ALPHA



INSIDE demo 1

The shift in console technology in 1995 was vast. Sony brought new hardware to a market used to cartridges and pseudo-3D graphics at best, and the ideal way to show what the PlayStation could do was to build a demo

Words by Daniel Lipscombe





» [PlayStation] *WipEout* did a great job by pulling in the mainstream crowd.

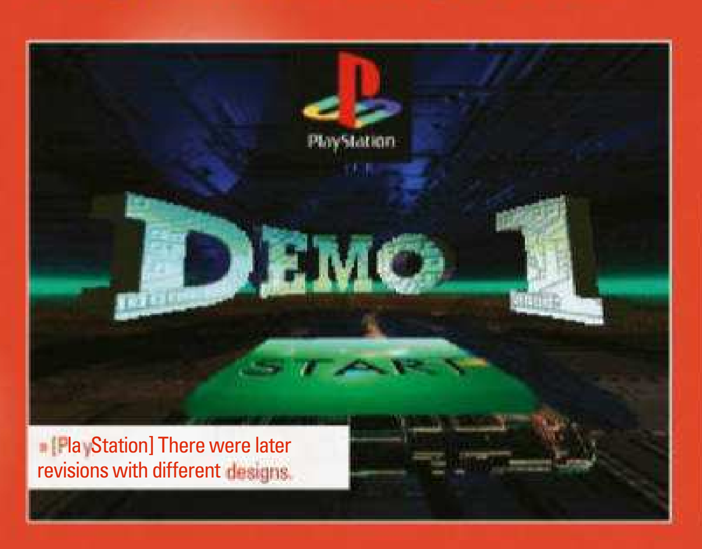
» [PlayStation] *Tekken*, in video only, showed great potential

» [PlayStation] Sony was constantly showing off its new technology throughout *Demo 1*.

As a newcomer to the videogames industry, it was integral that Sony had to build a platform to showcase its new PlayStation console to early adopters. Those who were plugged into the latest videogame news at the time knew what to look out for, sure – they would've looked wide-eyed at images in magazines of an impressive 3D T-rex that Sony was keen to show off. Others, however, needed a little nudge in the right direction. Thankfully, for these people, Sony produced a demo disc which was bundled in with all PlayStation consoles. This disc not only showcased some of the biggest games, allowing the public small slices of hands-on time, but it also fully showed off the potential of the technology that Sony's console housed.

The demo opens with a cinematic, full of mad, swirling colours and fractals as game titles and slogans are thrown at the player like prizes on an old-school game show. Between glimpses of the games presented on the disc, Sony wanted players to know what its unassuming grey box could do. Dubious buzzphrases such as "1.5 million flat-shaded polygons/sec" and "500,000 texture-mapped light-sourced polygons/sec" fly out at gamers. This was followed by more layman terms, "Graphics", "Data Engine" and "Memory". This peak 'Nineties' graphics montage finishes with the Sony Entertainment logo and the classic PlayStation branding before a title screen appears. A huge start button awaits in the centre of the screen, accompanied by strobing lights and pulsing music, an assault on the eyes and a welcome to the new 32-bit era.

Demo 1 was balanced perfectly with playable previews of games, bringing two racing games: the futuristic and speedy *WipEout*, and *Destruction Derby*, which displayed physics that consoles had never seen before. These were complemented by *Loaded*, a top-down ▶



» [PlayStation] There were later revisions with different designs.

> **"Getting the data out of the artists' Silicon Graphics machines into a PlayStation was no mean feat"**
> Nick Burcombe

THE BEST OF DEMO 1

Titles that expertly showcased the PlayStation's potential

WipEout brought a rollercoaster experience similar to *F-Zero* and became known for not only its adrenaline-rushing circuits, but also its pulse-pounding soundtrack. The game looked superb and enticed players into a series that's still raising heartrates today.

Destruction Derby showcased a carnage-filled motorsport dream from a very British developer, but sadly only managed to get two games under its belt. While short-lived, Psygnosis brought a genuinely interesting and exciting type of racing to PlayStation.

Loaded, ushered in top-down action, with tons of gore. It was obviously designed with a mature audience in mind – including depictions of murder and serial killers. With art from Greg Staples of *2000AD*, the game had a unique style suited to this new era.

Battle Arena Toshinden managed three instalments and had a dedicated fanbase for a while before the weapon-based fighter was ultimately eclipsed by *Tekken* and *Soulcalibur*. It wasn't quite the 'Saturn killer' that Sony had wanted it to be.



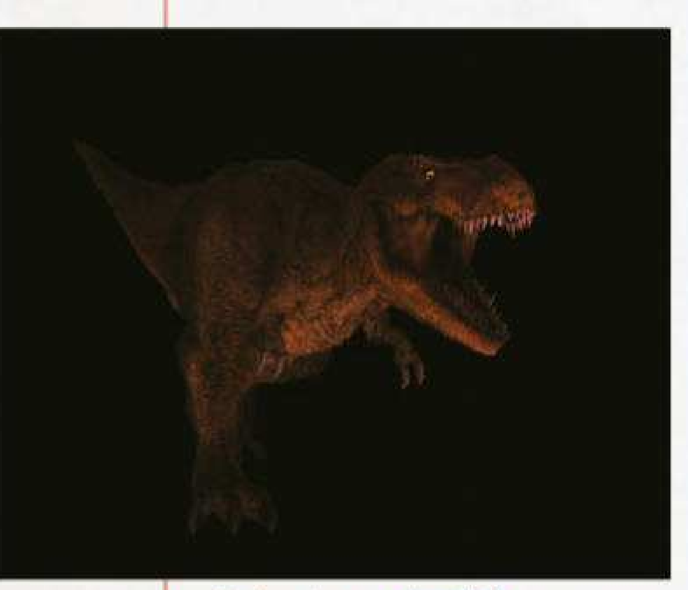


WALKING WITH A DINOSAUR

How Sony dropped jaws with its tech monster

Probably one of the highlights of the disc was this tech demo dedicated to a 3D model of a T-rex. While players couldn't control the full movement of the beast – they could shake its head and tail from side to side, as well as open its mouth. The dinosaur plodded into an ever-disappearing horizon, while players controlled the camera, zooming in and out of its features marvelling at the new tech. There was something hypnotic about this area of the demo and it was very unique. Along with the Manta Ray, the T-rex was wasn't about control or action, it was about spectacle.

While this style of demo wasn't seen all too often, it distilled the power of the PlayStation hardware into a sandbox type of experience. By giving users minimal control, the T-rex demo gave a sense of power both in terms of processing memory and character. The T-rex was representative of the PlayStation itself – a powerful but slightly unwieldy beast that would instil a feeling of awe to the people that experienced it.



» [PlayStation] The T-rex demonstration won over a lot of gamers.



» [PlayStation] *Battle Arena Toshinden* showed off the PlayStation's potential for one-on-one fighters.

» [PlayStation] Video previews supplemented the playable demos.

shooter with new lighting tech, and lastly *Battle Arena Toshinden* a traditional one-on-one fighting game that would lay the groundwork for the likes of *Tekken*, which wasn't far behind. There were also trailers for upcoming titles that didn't quite make the deadline for a playable demonstration, and tech showcases that showed off the ability of the PlayStation's hardware. New owners had the chance to dash home with their new console, set it up and take some of its games for a spin before buying the full thing with their hard-earned cash.

It was a boon for developers, particularly Psygnosis which would feature heavily on *Demo 1* with *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby*. The former would become a franchise that persists to this day, but it wasn't smooth sailing from the off as Nick Burcombe, cocreator of *WipEout* explains, "[There was] little in the way of useful development documentation, most of it was in Japanese," he says. " Inventing 3D development pipelines from zero. Just getting the data out of the artists' Silicon Graphics machines and into a PlayStation was no mean feat."

The *WipEout* demo opens with an antigravity racing vehicle being uncovered. The camera pans around from the side, displaying sharp angles and moody lighting before control is given over to the player. It's an ideal opener to *Demo 1*, one that truly blew the doors off the console as the vehicles screamed around the track, blasting over speed pads and launching from blind jumps.

> "We wanted to capture the essence and speed of WipEout in as small a footprint as possible"
> Nick Burcombe

Nick Burcombe notes, "We wanted to capture the essence and speed of the *WipEout* experience in as small a footprint as possible." And the team certainly managed to do so, as the game went on to sell over 450,000 copies. And Psygnosis wasn't done there, it had more to offer by with *Destruction Derby*.

While the Liverpool publisher had shown track-based racing with *WipEout*, it looked to Reflections, based in Newcastle, to venture in a different direction with an arena-based showing of cars smashing into each other. Psygnosis and Reflections had jumped from one end of the spectrum to the other, from psychedelic visuals to an attempt at photorealism, or as close as the PlayStation could get. *WipEout* showed the pace of the new system, *Destruction Derby* would focus on physics. Cars bashed one another, panels crumpling and shards flying off into the distance, replicated on a small HUD in the corner. The balance of destroying other cars over your own took place over a two-minute demo.

Dominic Mallinson was working within Psygnosis at the time and remembers a friendly rivalry between the two teams, "We were trying to outdo each other and push the technology as far as we could", he says. Dominic also remembers a lot of stress, "I remember for *WipEout* we were using a demo from E3 or something similar and Sony were pushing us to polish the demo ready for launch," ultimately the consoles that hit stores on launch day weren't packaged with *Demo 1*, it

was only with the second wave of systems that it was included. "It wasn't a huge gap, but that extra time would have allowed us some breathing room," says Dominic.

Elsewhere on the disc, *Loaded* offered an opportunity to break down the stereotype built up by Nintendo and Sega which had, for so long, aimed games at children and families. *Loaded* was a gritty, dark *2000AD*-esque game from Gremlin. Intended to be a blood-spattered action game, it focused on the hospital level from early on in the game. Art director Greg Staples remembers, "We had great assets and lighting and ideas, but no actual levels. We knew what we wanted. A lot of focus went into how the game would work because it was for the PlayStation and hadn't been done before."

The team crunched hard and *Loaded* made it to the disc, though it was missing from the German version of *Demo 1* due to localisation issues. The same goes for *Battle Arena Toshinden*, which was set to go head-to-head with Namco's *Tekken* which featured in video form only. *Battle Arena Toshinden* would be the first taste of 3D fighting on the console, with backgrounds as animated as the central fighters. Sony was pitching the game as being a 'Saturn killer' knowing it would need a fighting game to combat Sega's *Virtua Fighter*. The cast was small and smaller still was the playable selection of characters for *Demo 1*, limited to Eiji Shinjo, Ellis and Fo Fai. You could, however, play with a friend if you splashed out for an extra controller. Sega still had the advantage of brand awareness and arcade prestige with *Virtua Fighter* and *Battle Arena Toshinden* was left out of later revisions of *Demo 1*, in favour of *Tekken*.

Away from playable software, Sony included a huge amount of video content for other titles available soon after launch. Another racing game appeared in the form of *Ridge Racer* and *Twisted Metal* showed its hand as an arena-based vehicle battler. Of course, the Japanese manufacturer couldn't neglect the home-grown games that might appeal to Western markets and *Jumping Flash*, *Warhawk* and *Starblade Alpha* all showed what was coming from the east. However the video demos didn't really offer too much outside of seeing a small slice of game footage.

Total NBA '96 switched things up, however. Sure, a basketball game probably wouldn't appeal to the UK market as much as a football game, but the developers cleverly presented its demo by taking control of the teams away from the players, urging them to control the camera instead. This was another opportunity for Sony to demonstrate what was achievable with the PlayStation's technology – the camera could be changed to various fixed perspectives, but could also be steered, zoomed and manipulated in order to view the action. These camera controls would go on to be used in many other sports games, but more importantly would feature in 3D platformers.

Demo 1 wasn't necessarily all about games, though. It was also about what was inside the PlayStation and how it could be used in possible upcoming games. The V-CD section was rather an odd inclusion, especially as it wasn't used on future demo discs or software. The V-CD was a music visualisation program which required users to load the V-CD section, then take out the demo disc, replacing it with a music CD. Doing so would create a visual soundscape of patterns and colours using the music to alter the imagery. It was sort of like creating your own Chemical Brothers music video, except you could use power ballads if you really wanted to. The V-CD option was no more than the PlayStation flexing those polygon muscles, and subtly advising players as to what their games could possibly look like.

The jewels in the *Demo 1* crown weren't games, nor were they videos or reactive sound-based dreamscapes – they were nestled away in a section called simply 'tech'. Two separate demos featuring 3D models of a Manta Ray and a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Both, once loaded, were eerily quiet and in a similar vein to *Total NBA '96*, gave over control of a camera. The idea here was to showcase the 3D models and how they would move within an environment. While the Manta Ray was more of a one-off, we saw dinosaurs in the likes of *Tomb Raider*. But both were created to inspire awe and to transport consumers to a new world of possibilities.

What could show off the systems technology better than a lumping great dinosaur? It was the perfect tool to show off the console to friends and family. If they had any doubt as to why they should make the jump from the pixel powered SNES and Mega Drive, one look at the T-rex and they could be convinced the future lay with PlayStation.

And that was all that *Demo 1* needed to be, a gateway into possibility. By teasing a small handful of genres through direct play and others via video, gamers could look ahead at the next five years of gaming. While in other sections, the disc was strutting its stuff like a peacock, pushing the hardware as far as it could go to hint at worlds that would be built or new ways to play. For developers it was a bumpy ride, but for the players it was an exciting taste of the future. *



» [PlayStation] *Starblade* was shown off in video form only.



» [PlayStation] *Loaded* set out to make gaming mature.



» [PlayStation] *Destruction Derby* excited those with a love for vehicular destruction.



Wonderswan fact

■ There's no headphone jack on the WonderSwan – if you want to keep the machine's noises to yourself, you'll need an adaptor that plugs into the machine's extension port.

PROCESSOR: 16-BIT NEC V30 CPU (3.072MHZ)
RAM: 16KB SHARED RAM
GRAPHICS: 2.5-INCH FSTN LCD SCREEN, 224X144 RESOLUTION
AUDIO: FOUR-CHANNEL 4-BIT PCM
MEDIA: ROM CARTRIDGE (UP TO 16MB)

WonderSwan

» **MANUFACTURER:** Bandai » **YEAR:** 1999 » **COST:** ¥4,800 (launch), £20+ (today)

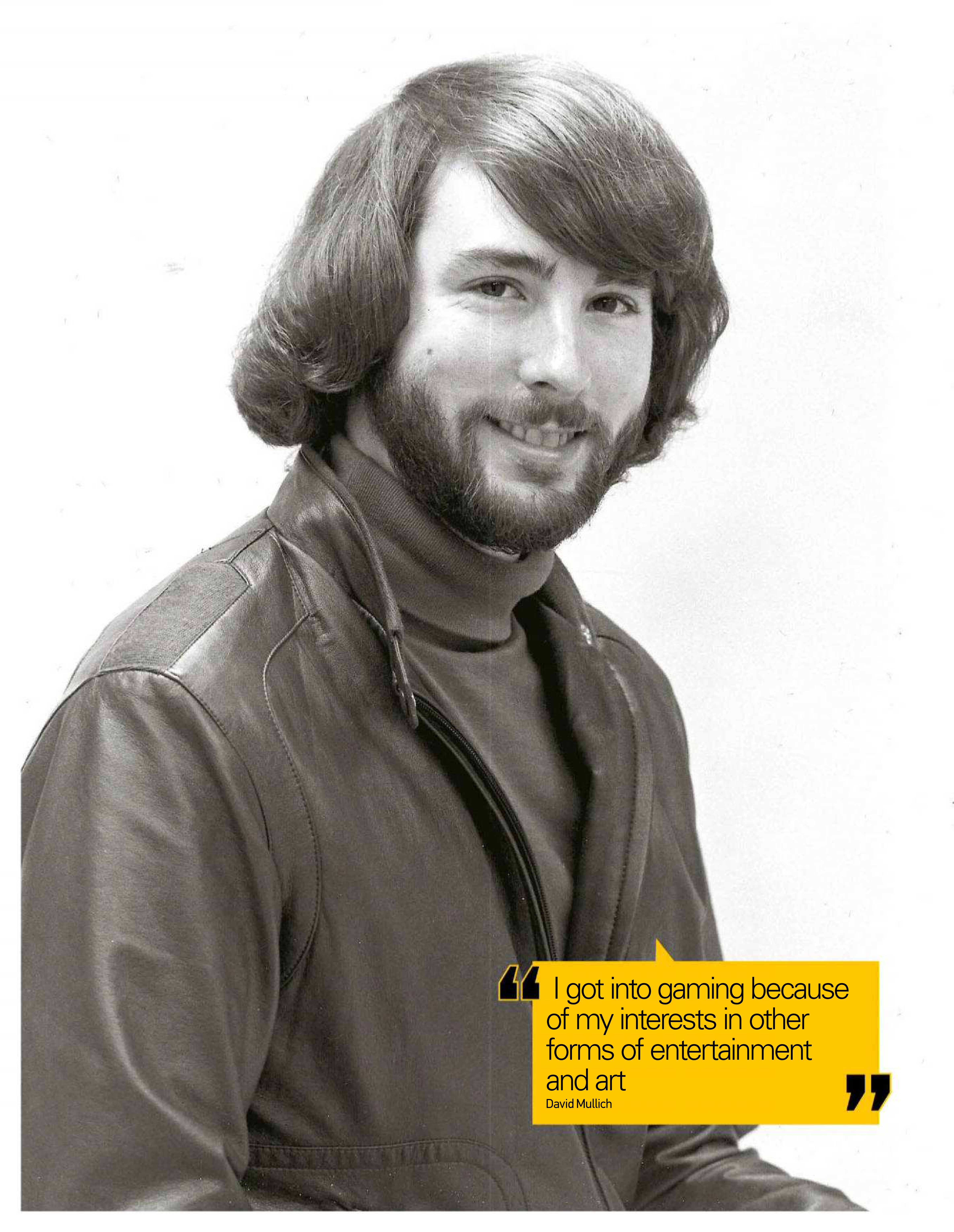
Though the WonderSwan wasn't Bandai's console market debut, it might as well have been – the Pippin, its collaboration with the then-faltering computer company Apple, made no impact at all. For its new handheld console, the toy giant made the smart decision to work with Game Boy inventor Gunpei Yokoi's new company Koto Laboratory. Though Yokoi would unfortunately pass away before the release of the machine, his design philosophy is clear to see. The machine was cheap, and its relatively high-resolution, black-and-white display and NEC V30 CPU allowed for an astonishing battery life, up to 40 hours on a single AA battery. The machine's button layout also allowed for vertically-oriented games.

Thanks to Bandai's IP catalogue and licensing muscle, the WonderSwan boasted an eclectic mix of games peppered with recognisable names from the anime world such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Gundam* and *One Piece*. The system also boasted a number of retro games including *Crazy Climber*, *Space Invaders*, *Lode Runner* and *Rainbow Islands*. The WonderSwan was never released outside of Japan, and struggled to compete with Nintendo's Game Boy Color, overall selling 1.55 million units. The machine was later succeeded by the backwards-compatible WonderSwan Color, released in December 2000.



EDITOR'S CHOICE
Gunpey

A good puzzle game is an essential for any handheld platform, and this one fills that role well. As tiles fill in from the bottom of the screen, your job is to rearrange them in such a fashion that they form a line, connecting from the left of the screen to the right. More points are available if you can connect additional lines to an existing clear before it disappears, too. It's a cheap and easy game to get hold of, and it's even named after the designer of the console, so it really should be the foundation of your collection.



> “I got into gaming because of my interests in other forms of entertainment and art”
>
> David Mullich



DAVID MULLICH

David Mullich has enjoyed a career unlike any other. Having started as a one-man design and production team, he went on to work with everyone from Disney to Activision, and Harlan Ellison to HR Giger

Words by Hareth Al Bustani

A veteran of the California coding scene, David Mullich has enjoyed a long career as a creative auteur and pioneer. He started out designing and programming Apple II games alone, including the experimental masterpiece, *The Prisoner*. However, he was destined for larger projects, becoming Disney's first ever videogames producer, before moving on to develop games with Harlan Ellison and HR Giger at Cyberdreams.

Having outlived many of his employers, he directed *Heroes Of Might And Magic III*, a critical and commercial hit, before being hired by Activision to save the fledgling *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*, once again to critical acclaim. Following a spell developing various mobile and web-based games, David now heads the Los Angeles Film School's Game Production Program, and runs Electric Sheep Consulting.

When did your passion for computing begin?
My interest in computing didn't take hold until I was in college. I took an Introduction To Computing class just to fulfil some of my General Education requirements, and I didn't understand computers or programming at first. Then, after a couple of weeks, everything fell into place in my head, and I finally understood how computers worked in general. But, it wasn't until a few months later, when I was waiting to use the computer lab printer to print out my homework, that I started coding a *Star Trek* game and got excited about the idea of interactive storytelling. As soon as I printed out my homework, I went over to the administration building and changed my college major from 'Undecided' to Computer Science.

» [Apple II] Mullich designed and programmed his first game, the text-based RPG *Space II*, for the upstart Edu-Ware.

How were you introduced to the late Seventies California coding scene?
One of my college professors offered me a job working as a clerk at Rainbow Computing, a computer store he owned with a couple of the other college professors. It was there that I learned about home computers – specifically, the Apple II. There wasn't much in the way of commercial software available at the time, so many of the store's customers wrote their own software – including home finance programs, word processors, databases and games – and had Rainbow Computing sell them in zip-lock bags with Xeroxed documentation.

What were your earliest projects?
My earliest commercial software was a database program that Rainbow Computing hired me to write for one of its customers, a coffee wholesaler who had a Wavemate Jupiter Computer. I then ported the program to the Apple II, named it Filemaster, and sold it through Rainbow Computing's catalogue. But it wasn't until I met one of Rainbow's customers, Sherwin Steffin of Edu-Ware Services, that I started making games. He asked me to make an expansion module for a science fiction role-playing game called *Space* that he and his partner had made. I wrote that expansion, called *Space II*, in about two weeks, and later followed that up with two other games: *Windfall: An Oil Crisis Simulation* and *Network*, a television network programming game. I developed all three games while a student at Cal State Northridge, and then Edu-Ware hired me full-time when I graduated.

As a young coder, what did you make of the environment at Edu-Ware?
Edu-Ware was based in Sherwin's one-bedroom apartment in Woodland Hills, California. There were just four of us at first. I programmed on a table in the living room, while Sherwin worked from the dining

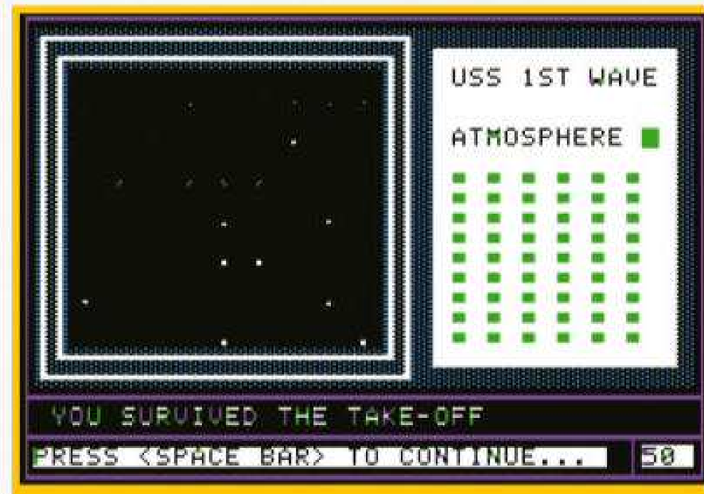


area. Our salesman, Mike Lieberman, made his phone calls from the bedroom. It was pretty cramped for about six months, until the company's financial successes allowed us to get a real suite of offices in a building about a mile away.

What was the philosophy behind your Apple II masterpiece, *The Prisoner*?
Our local PBS station was rerunning episodes of *The Prisoner*, and I became obsessed with the show and its theme of maintaining one's individuality against society's pressure to conform. I spent about six weeks developing the game. I didn't have much of a plan other than that I wanted it to consist of 20 minigames, each of which represented a different 'episode'. The one rule of the game was that you were given a number representing your reason for resigning from a classified job at the beginning of the game, but were never allowed to type or acknowledge this number. Well, at one point, it appeared that the game had crashed, with the message 'Error At Line', followed by the number you were given at the start. If you typed 'List' followed by the number – something that people who owned Apple Computers were likely to do – you would lose, having been tricked into believing you were no longer in the game.

All your early games were pretty out there – did you see gaming as an art form?
Yes, I got into gaming because of my interests in other forms of entertainment and art. There weren't really that many established rules or conventions at the time, because gaming was in its infancy. I played a bit of *Dungeons & Dragons* and the early arcade games, which were more dexterity-based, but since I was more interested in strategy games and storytelling, with everything that I did, I had to invent the mechanics.

As a small company, did Edu-Ware's lack of bureaucracy help?
There was very little in the way of needing to get approvals for the types of games I did. In fact, I remember one time they contacted me on a Monday and said that they were appearing at the West Coast Computer Fair that weekend and needed a new game. I was taking a Mass Communications class at the time and I'd just seen the movie *Network* so, in three days, I came up with a game about programming a television network, with a little bit of parody in it.



» [Apple II] *The RPG, Empire I: World Builders*, tasked players with spreading a new intergalactic empire.

Developing a game in three days… would that have involved sleepless nights?
It wouldn't be unusual for me to programme until four in the morning. My computer would overheat and I couldn't use the hard drive, so I had to go and bang on my brother's door at two in the morning, to borrow his cassette tape recorder, so I could save my work.

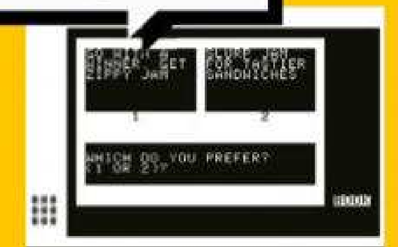
Was programming for the Apple II difficult?
Some of it was; some was easy. A lot of my games were programmed in BASIC, which is a very simple language, so I could easily programme without much planning. I'd just come up with an idea for a game and bang it out. Later, once I started making games using graphics, I switched over to assembly language and that was a lot more complex, especially the Apple II's graphics – drawing lines and filling them with colours involved complex programming.



» David is a fan of the Apple II, having coded for it early on in his career.

What were Edu-Ware's sales figures like?
It was enough that we when I started at Edu-Ware there were just four of us, and four years later,

FIVE TO PLAY
Key games from David you should look up



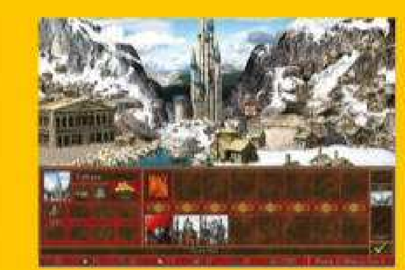
THE PRISONER
■ David designed and programmed this title alone, drawing upon an enormous range of influences to produce a truly one-of-a-kind game. Inspired by the hit television show, the player must navigate a series of abstract minigames, specifically designed to trick them into giving up secret information.



DUCK TALES: THE QUEST FOR GOLD
■ This title follows Scrooge McDuck's attempt to earn more money than his archrival, Flintheart Glomgold, to become Dime's Duck Of The Year. Scrooge travels the world, platforming, caving, flying planes, taking photographs and even playing the stock market.



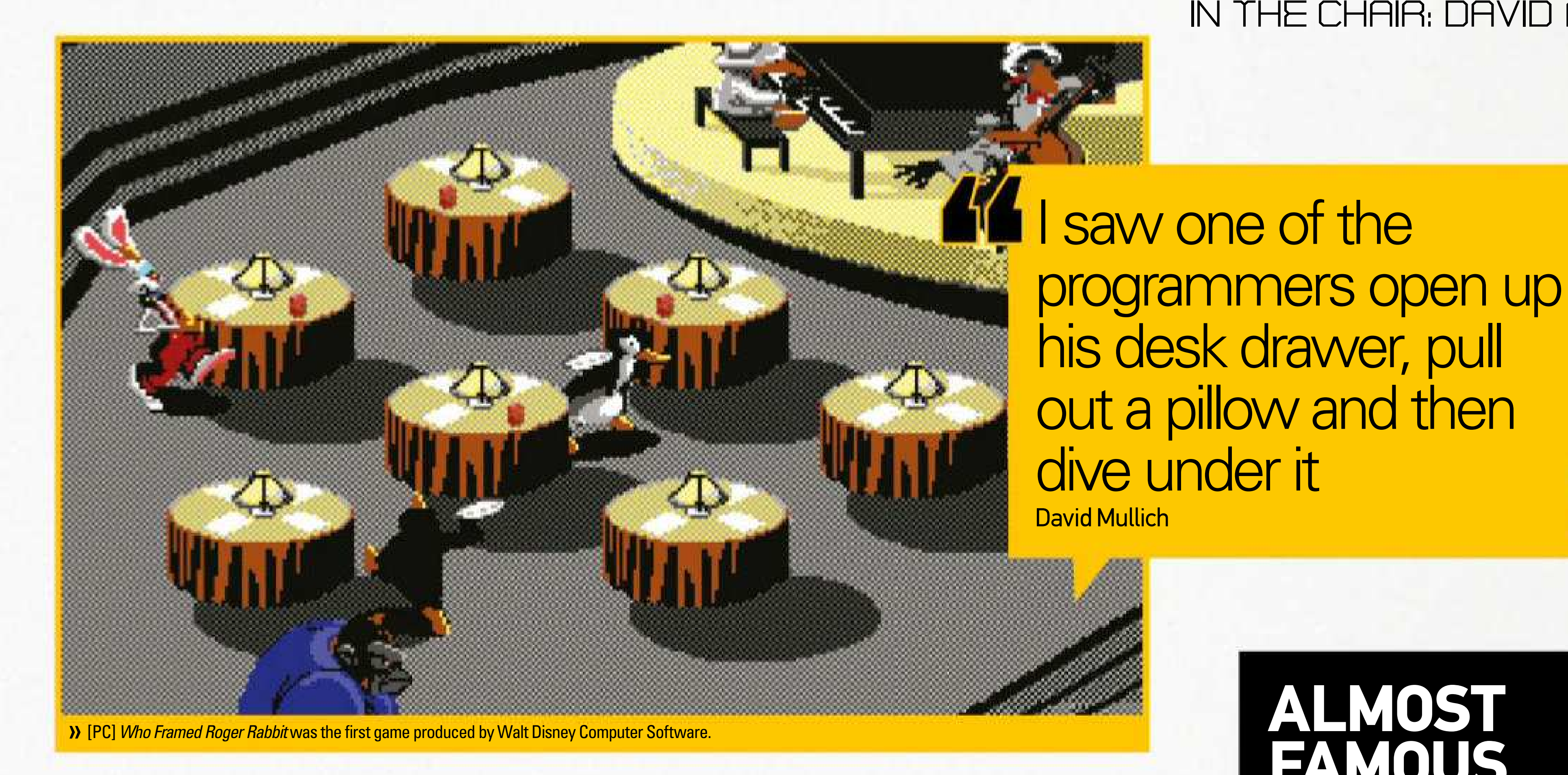
I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM
■ David worked closely with legendary writer, Harlan Ellison, on this point-and-click adaptation of his chilling story. Players attempt to help five characters escape from a virtual hell, designed by an omnipotent supercomputer, with the power to warp matter at will.



HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III: THE RESTORATION OF ERATHIA
■ This entry built upon the existing strategy franchise. The result was a hit, with players controlling heroes with armies of mythical creatures, conquering and developing settlements, gathering resources and hunting for artefacts.



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – BLOODLINES
■ When David was brought onto this project, it was a mess of coding problems. However, the producer turned things around within just a year and a half, producing a cult classic RPG – aided by engrossing storytelling and Valve's brand-new Source engine.



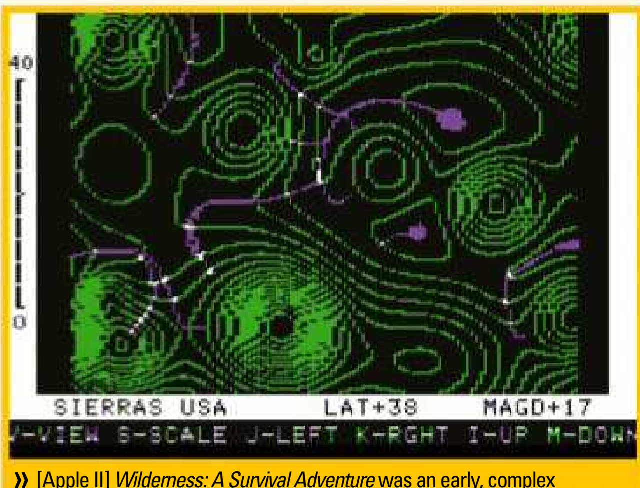
» [PC] *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* was the first game produced by Walt Disney Computer Software.

> I saw one of the programmers open up his desk drawer, pull out a pillow and then dive under it
> David Mullich

there were 50 of us. But we did eventually have to sell the company, in order to sustain ourselves, especially because around that time was the videogame crash of 1983.

After that, you cofounded Electric Transit, which closed down after two years. Why was that?
At that time it was really tough to get distribution, because it wasn't like today, where if you can break into Walmart or into Best Buy, you can get your game into thousands or stores. There was a whole bunch of individual 'mom-and-pop' computer stores all around the country to make deals with, and we just didn't have the sales people to do that. We needed a distributor and Electronic Arts, which formed about two years before we did, already had a good distribution network – so, we made a deal with them and became their first affiliated label publisher. The problem was that they also made their initial mistakes with us – they overestimated the demand for our game.

But then you became Disney's first-ever videogames producer. How did that happen?
They brought me in for an interview, and asked me a number of questions, including if I could name all of the seven dwarfs. Being a Disney fan, I was able to do that, and they hired me. They had formed a unit within Walt Disney Educational Media and they already had a couple of people – a learning specialist, a marketing person and a manager. I was the first person who actually had software development experience and eventually, as we became our own division, we became Walt Disney Computer Software.



» [Apple II] *Wilderness: A Survival Adventure* was an early, complex survival simulator with a 300-word vocabulary.

What were the first games that you produced when working at Disney?
The first game that we made internally was *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. The movie turned out to be more successful than I think anyone at Disney realised it would. And the game did pretty well, so that kind of launched us in producing a whole bunch of games. I made *Duck Tales: The Quest For Gold* for the PC and I was a producer on the *Duck Tales* Nintendo game that was developed by Capcom. Disney decided to let other companies publish the console games, which was more expensive, because of the physical cartridge that was being used.

How much pressure were you guys under, making *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*?
Disney wanted the game released at the same time as the film, and that only gave us three months to work on it, so we hired a developer, Silent Software, to develop the game for us. In order to make the deadline, I mean, they really crunched. They worked late hours – I would often be at their offices at around midnight. I remember one time I was there late, I saw one of the programmers open up his desk drawer, pull out a pillow and then dive under it!

That's intense! What was the production process like for *Duck Tales: The Quest For Gold*?
We were actually originally approached by another company called Cinemaware that specialised in making games with a very cinematic feel. They had made a Three Stooges game and a Robin Hood game, and they came up to us with the idea of doing *Duck Tales*. But, Disney said, 'Wait a second. We're publishing our own PC games; why should we license out to some other developer? We'll make the game ourselves.' It was our property, so I actually contacted the developer that had made the Three Stooges game for

ALMOST FAMOUS

The games David never got to bring to market

At Disney, David had to pitch all his ideas to a committee of six risk-averse managers. Desperate to innovate games, he would borrow costumes and props, pitching games based on Pirates Of The Caribbean and other Disneyland rides. While an It's A Small World game was dismissed for the risk of promoting stereotypes, even David's idea for an Epcot Center game, focused on building cities of tomorrow, gathering resources and developing technology was deemed 'uninteresting'. "The very next year, Sid Meier came out with *Civilisation*," laughs David.

Later, at Cyberdreams, he met with Wes Craven, to develop a haunted house psychological horror concept. David hired a development company, which produced a demo so good a magazine named it one of best adventure games shown off at E3. However, when he showed it to Wes Craven's agent, she panicked. "She just kept saying, 'This is terrible, this is terrible, this is terrible,' and I'm like, 'But it won an award! This is good!' I think this was just yet another case of somebody who didn't understand videogames not being able to see the end result, based upon a work in progress."

When he joined Activision, David was finally given the chance to work on 3D real-time strategy game for *Star Trek* – the franchise that first sparked his interest in game development all those years back. "That project was going really well, and I remember showing off a prototype of it for Activision's green light committee," he remembers. "The vice president of our division came up to me afterwards and said it was the best presentation he had seen in his ten years at Activision." Unfortunately, when *Star Trek: Enterprise* and *Star Trek: Nemesis* bombed, the company decided to drop the properties, because Paramount was not supporting the franchise with good products.

SELECTED TIMELINE

GAMES

- SPACE II [1979] APPLE II
- WINDFALL: AN OIL CRISIS SIMULATION [1980] APPLE II
- THE PRISONER [1980] APPLE II
- NETWORK [1980] APPLE II
- EMPIRE I: WORLD BUILDERS [1981] APPLE II
- PRISONER 2 [1982] APPLE II, ATARI 8-BIT, PC
- RENDEZVOUS: A SPACE SHUTTLE FLIGHT SIMULATION [1982] APPLE II
- EMPIRE II: INTERSTELLAR SHARKS [1982] APPLE II
- TRANQUILLITY BASE [1984] APPLE II
- WILDERNESS: A SURVIVAL ADVENTURE [1985] APPLE II, PC
- LUNAR EXPLORER: A SPACE FLIGHT SIMULATOR [1986] APPLE II, PC
- WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT? [1988] APPLE II, COMMODORE 64, AMIGA, ATARI ST
- MATTERHORN SCREAMER! [1988] APPLE II, COMMODORE 64, PC
- THE CHASE ON TOM SAWYER'S ISLAND [1988] APPLE II, COMMODORE 64, PC
- DUCK TALES [1989] NES, GAME BOY
- DUCK TALES: THE QUEST FOR GOLD [1990] VARIOUS
- DICK TRACY [1990] VARIOUS
- MICKEY'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE MAKER [1991] APPLE II, PC
- DICK TRACY: THE CRIME-SOLVING ADVENTURE [1991] AMIGA, PC
- DICK TRACY [1991] GAME BOY
- VIDEO SPEEDWAY [1992] CD-I
- CYBERRACE [1993] PC
- I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM [1995] PC, MAC
- DARK SEED II [1995] VARIOUS
- NOIR: A SHADOWY THRILLER [1996] PC
- HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III: THE RESTORATION OF ERATHIA [1999] PC, MAC
- HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC III: ARMAGEDDON'S BLADE [1999] PC
- HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC: MILLENNIUM EDITION [1999] PC
- HEROES CHRONICLES: WARLORDS OF THE WASTELANDS [2000] PC
- HEROES CHRONICLES: MASTERS OF THE ELEMENTS [2000] PC
- HEROES CHRONICLES: CONQUEST OF THE UNDERWORLD [2000] PC
- HEROES CHRONICLES: CLASH OF THE DRAGONS [2000] PC
- HEROES CHRONICLES: THE FINAL CHAPTERS [2001] PC
- HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC IV [2002] PC, MAC
- VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – BLOODLINES [2004] PC
- TONY HAWK AMERICAN WASTELAND [2005] VARIOUS
- BODE MILLER ALPINE RACING [2006] MOBILE
- NBC SPORTS REAL GOLF [2006] MOBILE
- FREAKY CREATURES [2009] PC, MAC, MOBILE
- BAKUGAN DIMENSIONS [2010] WEB
- PAIR OF KINGS: PYRAMID OF PUZZLES [2012] WEB

Cinemaware, Incredible Technologies, and we worked together on what the game would be.

After Disney, you turned down an offer from Sierra – what was the story there?
I'm a city guy. I've lived all my life in Los Angeles, and as much as I love the mountains, I couldn't see myself uprooting and moving into the wilderness. Just when I got the employment contract from Sierra, I found out about this job opening at a little tiny company called Interactive Support Group, which developed a full-motion video driver for the CD-i system and wanted to develop products for it. I wasn't a big believer in the CD-i platform. It didn't have a graphics processor to speak of, so it really wasn't well-suited to games, but I somehow came up with a racing game. I called it *Video Speedway*. Mostly, I was trying to figure out how I could take this platform and really play off what it did well – which was play videos.

Just a month before ISG closed, you joined Cyberdreams. What was it like working with HR Giger on *Darkseed II*?
He came up with an idea for a game where you climbed to the top of a pyramid, and there would be another pyramid, and you would just do that over and over and over again. And, you know, that's not the basis of a game mechanic. Plus, he was describing more of an arcadey type game. I had to explain to him: 'This is a sequel to another game, so people expect it to have similar mechanics – it needs to be an adventure game, but maybe I can work in some of your ideas.' He mentioned that he wanted to see catwalks everywhere in the game, so everywhere you walk through the Dark World, the alternate universe based upon his artwork in the game, we would have catwalks.

What do you think made you well suited to working with people like HR Giger and Harlan Ellison?
I am able to be flexible without losing the ultimate vision, so, whereas the goal is firmly set, I'm very open to different solutions for reaching that goal. Plus, I don't get upset very easily, I don't fly off the handle, I don't get angry, I don't panic and I think that helps me deal with people whose personalities are more volatile than mine.

After Cyberdreams closed down, you moved to 3DO to direct *Heroes Of Might And Magic III*.



» [PC] David produced the surreal point-and-click adventure *Dark Seed II* in close collaboration with eccentric artist, HR Giger.



» [PC] *Noir: A Shadowy Thriller* evoked classic film noir tropes, with a private investigator searching for his missing partner.

How did you follow up a game voted *PC Gamer*'s sixth best PC game at the time?
My only concern about accepting the job offer was: 'Is the only place to go with this down? Could I only produce a worse game than this?' I thought it was a great game; a fun game, but the graphics looked about five years behind the time. And its look and feel had kind of a playful Disney quality. I wanted to give it a slightly darker and grittier tone, so I was actually using *Warhammer* as my inspiration for how to revise it. I went and looked up a lot of artwork and fantasy creatures that were a little bit more menacing. But, a lot of the credit for *Heroes Of Might and Magic III* being as good as it was goes to Greg Fulton, a designer who was hired the same day that I was – we had never met each other before, but we were paired together as director and designer, and fortunately hit it off.

Along with art director Phelan Sykes and lead programmer John Bolton, you've described it as a 'dream team'.
Of all my experiences in the game industry, I think that was the best team that I ever worked with. It really was a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts, and I don't know how we created a game that was even better than *Heroes Of Might And Magic II*, but we did.

Like most companies you worked for, 3DO went out of business – is this a trend?
I think the gaming industry has always been volatile. A lot of companies started up and then closed their doors afterwards. Very few companies have survived for many years. The problem was a lot of the games that 3DO made didn't sell very well and even though the games that we made at New World Computing were bestsellers, it wasn't enough to sustain the rest of the company.

When you joined Activision, you were given the task of turning around the flailing *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*. How did you do it?
Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines had been in development for a year and a half. It really wasn't progressing very well, and they needed a stronger producer, so they sent me to work with the developer, Troika Games. Activision believed the problem was that couldn't reach closure on things; everything was always in a continuous state of development. And,



» [PC] *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* saw David's team standing guard over its source code.

> It's different from the days when I could get called up by someone needing a new game that weekend
> David Mullich

» [PC] David wanted *Heroes Of Might And Magic III* to have a gritty tone to it.

as a result, some of the other games that they had developed were very buggy. We got to the point where I brought down a couple of Activision testers with me, and they would play test everything and either give it a thumbs up or a thumbs down. Once they gave it a thumbs up, we would not allow them to make any changes to that part of the game – essentially we stood guard over the source code. Occasionally, that led to some unpleasant confrontations because a designer might come up with a great idea for an Easter Egg and we'd tell them 'Nope, can't put it in, this part of the game's done'. And they'd get angry and kick a chair.

You became somewhat of a pioneer in mobile gaming. How did you get involved in that?
Jamie Ottilie, who had worked in the mailroom of Cyberdreams way back when, started his own company producing mobile games and he hired me to be his producer. He had a contract to make videogames based upon NBC Sports properties. When I joined them, the Olympics were coming up so we made some Olympics themed games. So there was *Bode Miller Alpine Racing*, a speed skating game and a couple of other winter sports games. Unfortunately, this was before the iPhone came out, and back then you had to make a game for 100 different models of phones, supporting different types of screen resolutions, aspect ratios and capabilities, which made game development rather difficult.

After developing websites and online games for Spin Master, you started your own consultancy. What are your main areas of expertise?
I've been hired to do gamification work for non-game applications, like dating websites and shopping websites, but I've also been hired to consult on educational game development. A number of companies have brought me in to consult on ways to make their learning games more fun. I was even an expert witness in the lawsuit of Wizards of the Coast vs Cryptozoic, for the *Magic: The Gathering* copyright infringement lawsuit.

Alongside heading the Los Angeles Film School's game production programme, you developed a Boy Scouts of America game design merit badge. What is that?
The Boy Scouts of America has over 100 different merit badges and scouts can learn not just basic scouting skills, but you can also teach them about different careers and hobbies. That's actually one of my prouder accomplishments, because the thing about working on videogames is that the technology gets obsolete so quickly. In fact, when I meet kids today, most of them have never played any of my games, but the game design merit badge is something that will last for decades and decades and decades.

What do you think makes it challenging for casual gamers to enjoy retro games?
You may look at an older game and think the graphics are primitive or the gameplay is simplistic, and not appreciate it for what it was for gamers at the time, how revolutionary it might have been or how engaging it may have been. But, even more so, you don't have the hardware to play them on, unless they've been remastered or you have an emulator for playing them.

A lot of companies you worked for had serious distribution problems. How have platforms like Steam made things easier, and harder?
The nice thing about Steam is that it's a lot easier to get games based on unusual ideas published, and it's a lot easier to prove you have an audience for the games, instead of trying to convince someone that there will be an audience for them. But, because it's so easy to get your games published on Steam, I read there were like 20,000 games available on Steam currently, now you have so much competition. So whereas it's easier to get published, it's harder to make sales. And it's much tougher to make triple-A games, because nowadays the average triple-A game has a budget of around $50-$60 million, and hundreds of people working over a couple of years. It's a lot different from the days when I could get called up by someone needing a new game that weekend.

What current trends happening in the world of videogames are of the most interestto you at the moment?
Whenever I go to E3, I always gravitate towards the IndieCade booth and I look at more esoteric games that involve physical components to them. Even though the quality of games gets better and better; the graphics get better; the stories are getting better, too often a lot of the games seem like the same old thing, especially from triple-A publishers. So, actually, I'm not attracted to trends, I'm more attracted to the outliers. ★



Sin And Punishment: Successor To The Earth

SEEING IS BELIEVING

» N64 » TREASURE/ NINTENDO R&D1 » 2000

Treasure is one of my favourite game developers. Granted, it's not always the most consistent with its output, but its games are always inventive and the company always tries to push any available tech as far as possible – plus it largely makes shooty-based games and I love shooty-based games.

To me, the most technologically impressive games are those that seem to have been made via alchemy and are games that shouldn't be possible on the hardware they are on. *Sin And Punishment* is one such game and I remember how much of an impression it left on the staff at work when I first dragged my Nintendo 64 into the *games™* office around 15 years ago.

I can't remember why I took my N64 in that day (I must have been writing something for the magazine's retro section) but I can remember the general indifference from the other games mags, because the teams were all obsessed with the PS2, GameCube and Xbox. As people drifted past me, they would inevitably stop to watch for a while and ask me what I was playing (which made sense as Treasure's game never received a PAL release).

By the time I'd reached the part shown here, quite a few people were gathered around my desk, so a manager popped over to see what was drawing all the attention. As the rest of the staff started to disperse he asked if the game was running on a modified N64 because there was no way it could be '*that* good'. But it was that good, and indeed *Sin And Punishment* still is. Granted the low polygons give away its origins somewhat, but when you sit down to play that level and witness the platform you're fighting on spin and swoop around a huge battleship you'll be as enthralled as everyone else was that day.

There are plenty more inspiring moments from Treasure's game that I could mention here as to why you should seek it out and play it, but to do so would ruin *Sin & Punishment*'s brilliance. Seek it out and give it a playthrough, I guarantee that it will leave your gob feeling well and truly smacked. ★


LIFE



>> Plenty of variety this month. Tanglewood finally gets released, Shadow Of The Tomb Raider is with us and Capcom drop a surprise bundle of entertaining scrolling brawlers



[Mega Drive] That yellow thing Nymn is rolling is a Fuzzl that needs returning to its nest.

Tanglewood IS IT WORTH TANGLING WITH?

INFORMATION

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE

» **ALSO ON:** PC, MAC, LINUX

» **RELEASED:** OUT NOW

» **PRICE:** £54 (£13.99 STEAM)

» **DEVELOPER:** BIG EVIL CORP

» **PUBLISHER:** IN-HOUSE

» **PLAYERS:** 1



We've long been intrigued by *Tanglewood* – despite being developed for the Mega Drive, the project has been put together by Matt Phillips, a man who cut his teeth in the world of modern game development. Now we have the finished project in our hands, we're pleased to say that it is old school in most of the ways you'd hope, as well as a couple that are less welcome.

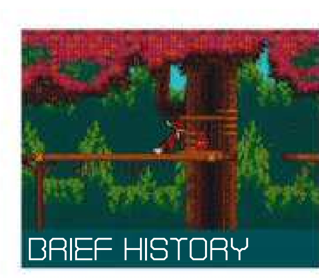
Tanglewood stars Nymn, a little fox on an alien world that is similar to our own. The aim of the game is simply to travel from stage to stage, surviving various hazards along the journey – primarily other creatures, but also environmental hazards like spike pits, large objects and cage traps. In order to do this, Nymn has to make use of Fuzzls – fluff balls that can grant temporary new abilities to our hero, so long as he brings them back to their nests. These are colour-coded – yellow ones grant the ability to glide, green ones allow you to slow down time, red ones power contraptions and blue ones allow you to take control of the normally deadly Djakk creatures.



» [Mega Drive] Nymn's gliding ability doesn't just help him cover gaps – he can be blown upwards, too.

As a result, much of the game is a puzzle experience, as you try to work out what needs to be done to create a pathway to each nest. In the first couple of stages this is pretty simple, but by the third chapter you'll be interacting with lift systems, button-activated bridges and multiple objects to achieve your goals, making it much more satisfying. This improves further about halfway through, when you meet a companion. Your semi-autonomous pal can fit through spaces Nymn can't and can be thrown up to higher areas, and will intelligently retrieve Fuzzls and other objects, allowing for even more satisfying puzzle design. When you're working together to solve puzzles, the game feels pretty great.

Nymn isn't much of a fighter, and has to rely on the environment to deal



BRIEF HISTORY

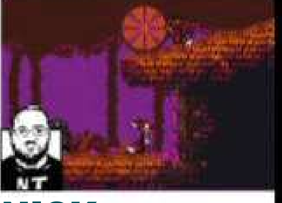
» Matt Phillips, the man behind developer Big Evil Corp, has spent most of his career as a programmer on modern games such as *Homefront: The Revolution* and *Lego Harry Potter*. In November 2016 he launched a Kickstarter for *Tanglewood*, a new Mega Drive game to be developed using original tools and processes from the Nineties, and received £54,830 in pledges. The game is a puzzle platformer inspired by the likes of *The Lion King* and *Another World*, and tells a story using wordless cutscenes. After a couple of delays from its initially planned December 2017 release date, it has finally arrived with us.



PICKS OF THE MONTH



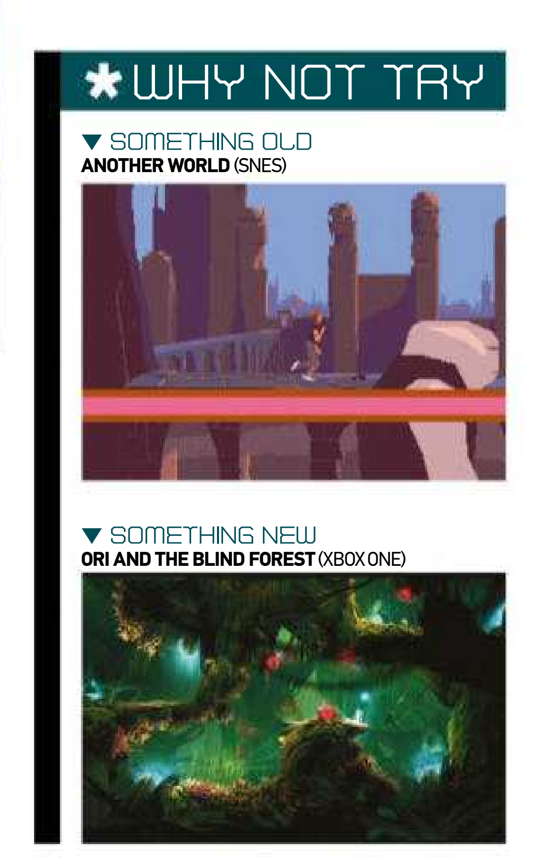
DARRAN
Capcom Beat 'Em Up Bundle
The lack of certain licences is a shame, but this remains an excellent package of games.



NICK
Tanglewood
Despite occasional frustrations, I greatly enjoyed my time with *Tanglewood* – it's a rather lovely 16-bit platformer.


» [Mega Drive] Enemy confrontations are often a bit clumsy, including this boss encounter.


» [Mega Drive] *Tanglewood* can be a very attractive game at times, as this sunset scene amply proves.


WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
ANOTHER WORLD (SNES)

▼ SOMETHING NEW
ORI AND THE BLIND FOREST (XBOX ONE)

with most of his enemies, whether that's luring them into sticking their tusks into the wall, or dropping boulders on their heads. Unfortunately, the action side of things is a bit less satisfying, as there's a heavy dose of trial-and-error design here that reminds us of *Another World* (a game that is cited as one of *Tanglewood*'s inspirations). There are a few places where objects can drop on you from off the screen, and very occasionally even a blind jump. Enemy encounters can often be frustrating, especially early in the game, and while they do improve as the game continues there will always be times when you're left wondering how on earth you were supposed to react to a hazard without prior knowledge. This isn't helped by some questionable collision boxes, particularly on the projectiles during one major enemy encounter. Fortunately, you do at least have infinite lives.

Tanglewood is a game that will be favoured by the patient. Besides the potential for frustration in the action sequences, there's the fact that it's the puzzles that dominate play time, so while Nymn moves around quickly there's little urgency to much of the game. The end of chapter two features a rather irritating sequence in which Nymn gets caught in a thunderstorm, where the rules of how to avoid death never seem 100 per cent clear. Given the game's simplicity during the first couple of chapters, we could imagine people giving up at that point – which would be a shame, as the game gets *really* good after that point. It's the kind of game that you'll sometimes need to put down, but the password saves do at least mean you can return to where you left off without problems.

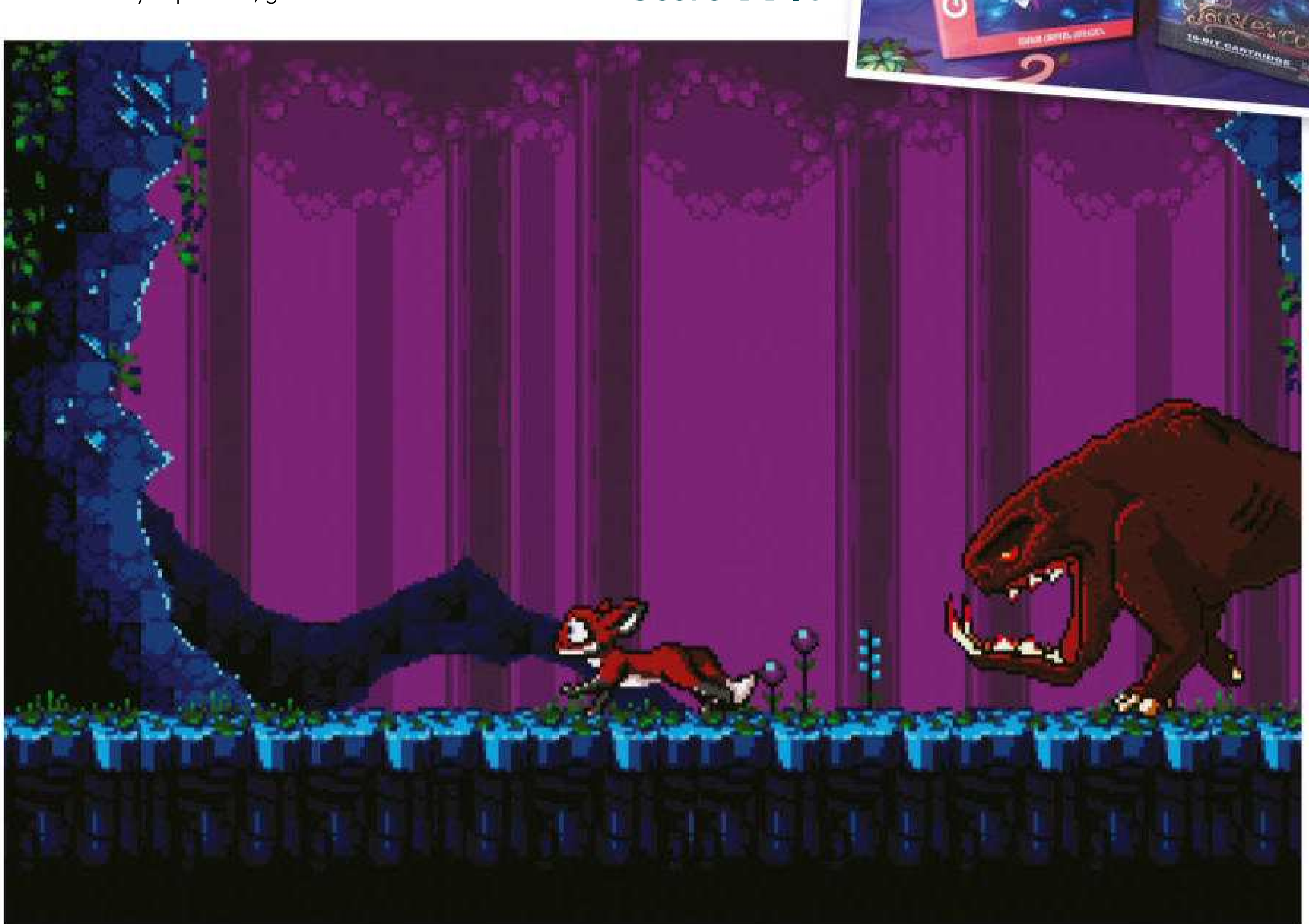
Graphically, *Tanglewood* is a treat. The game makes bold use of the Mega Drive's limited colour palette, with most chapters featuring a new set of colours during each act which conveys the transition from day to night. There are large enemies to be found, and animation is as good as you'd hope for on the system. The sound is also praiseworthy, featuring great sampled sound effects (particularly the water splashes) and soft, soothing sounds that aren't typical of the Mega Drive's YM2612 chip. We didn't detect any slowdown from the game's 60fps target, and technical performance in general seemed rock solid.

Tanglewood isn't quite a top-tier Mega Drive platform game – that would have been incredibly impressive, given that the era was a golden age for the genre – but it is definitely a quality addition to the console's library, which will appeal to fans of more cerebral games like *Another World* and *Ecco The Dolpin*. We hope we'll see Big Evil Corp back on the Mega Drive in the future, maybe with a sequel, as the hardware is being used well and the action sequences would be significantly improved with just a few changes. Until then, *Tanglewood* is a good game and a strong first effort – but it's also not for the easily frustrated.

In a nutshell

***Tanglewood* doesn't coast on the novelty of being a Mega Drive game in 2018 – it's an attractive and enjoyable platformer, albeit one with just enough frustrating moments to turn less patient players off.**

>> Score **79%**


» [Mega Drive] When you see a Djakk, the only worthwhile course of action is to run fast and run far.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Capcom Beat 'Em Up Bundle

» **System:** Switch (tested) Xbox One, PS4, PC » **Buy it from:** Online » **Buy it for:** £15.99

One of the surprises from Nintendo's September Direct was Capcom's revelation that seven of its classic scrolling arcade fighters would be repackaged for a new generation of gamers. And while it's not perfect, the collection remains a fascinating look at some of Capcom's best games from the once-popular genre.

The highlights are easily *Armored Warriors* and *Battle Circuit*, two of the last scrolling arcade brawlers that Capcom released. Both titles are excellent fun, with *Armored Warriors* putting you in the metallic frame of a gigantic mech, while *Battle Circuit* allows you to control a selection of bizarre bounty hunters, which include a pink sentient ostrich and a walking venus flytrap lookalike. While they share similar core mechanics (as all seven games do) they also feel refreshingly different to each other with *Armored Warriors* allowing you to pick up weapons from fallen enemies and bolt them onto your own robot, while *Battle Circuit*'s design revolves around an innovative power-up system that lets you enhance your fighter as you collect more coins.

This freshness extends to the other five games on the system and while they all feature similar themes, every game in the compilation feels markedly different enough that boredom rarely sets in. *Kings Of Dragons* has a fantasy setting and lays the groundwork for Capcom's brilliant *Dungeons & Dragons* games (which sadly aren't included) while *Warriors Of Fate* focuses on mounted combat and *Knights Of The Round* has an emphasis on blocking attacks and delivering deadly counterattacks. *Captain Commando* and *Final Fight* make up the final two games and are still as much fun to play today as they were on their original release.

Sadly, while Capcom has put together a decently priced collection of games, it feels barebones with only a nice selection of art to browse through. There are no scanline options either, meaning the games don't look as good as they could on a bigger screen. Despite these niggles, Capcom's compilation still packs plenty of punch.

>> Score **83%**





» [Switch] Capcom's compilation allows up to four players to fight locally or online, depending on the game.

» [Switch] Your mechs in *Armored Warriors* can get powered up with all sorts of crazy weaponry.



SNK Heroines: Tag Team Frenzy

» **System:** PS4 (tested), Switch
» **Buy it from:** Retail, Online » **Buy it for:** £44.99

SNK's latest fighter will be divisive, as it aims for accessibility and party play with a side of (admittedly tongue-in-cheek) sex appeal. The all-female cast can be decked out in different costumes, so if you've ever wanted to see Mai Shiranui wearing less than usual, this is for you.

Combat is simplified, with changes that will feel alien to hardcore fans. There's a block button, no crouching and specials are activated with a direction and one button. Additionally, items can be used and fights must end with a super move. There's just enough depth to the combat that it's enjoyable, but unless you're desperate to play as a gender-swapped Terry Bogard, it's best left to genre novices.

>> Score **60%**



Shadow Of The Tomb Raider

» **System:** Xbox One (tested) PS4, PC
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail » **Buy it for:** £44.99

Although it adds new mechanics in the form of swimming and stealth, there's a familiarity to Lara Croft's latest adventure that becomes difficult to shake. It looks spectacular, with rich jungles providing plenty of stunning vistas to gawp at as you scramble along ledges, battle jaguars, slay soldiers and listen to the inane plot (that's arguably the weakest aspect of the game). It retains the salvaging system of the earlier titles, but adds an enhanced skill tree that makes running around the jungle highly satisfying once you're fully tooled up. It's far more puzzle-focused than the earlier games, too, although the actual tombs will still disappoint those who feel in love with the original games.

 Score **70%**



Two Point Hospital

» **System:** PC, Mac
» **Buy it from:** Online » **Buy it for:** £25

You wouldn't always expect a spiritual successor to be the perfect picture of health, especially when it arrives 21 years later, but *Two Point Hospital* has achieved just that. Rising from the ashes of Bullfrog, Two Point Studio's debut is a compelling piece of nostalgia that takes on the heart of *Theme Hospital* without losing any of the elements that made the original such a success. As with its predecessor, a bit of ennui does set in towards the later levels but it's nothing that'll deter you entirely. With the likelihood of more *Two Point* games in the making, we can't help but be excited by the possibility of the formerly cancelled *Theme* projects to be on their way to making a full recovery.

>> Score **80%**



» [C64] Catching some air having spent time beneath the waves in *Wave Hero*.

» [C64] It would be so much easier if poor Elevator Eric could just use the elevators.

» [C64] *SEUCK* competition entry *Ceti 2*, a traditional scrolling blaster.

NOT SO CRAP

***Reset* magazine's 'craptastic' competition has a misleading name.** Entries had to be 4KB or less in size, but there were still many playable and indeed interesting games submitted. There were too many to cover in depth so we'll instead focus on a few of the titles which grabbed our attention most. For starters there's *Conga 4096* from Paul Koller, a demake of RGCD's *Pan-Dimensional Conga Combat* where a trail of dots behind the player's craft are used to destroy incoming enemies, along with a powerful laser weapon which can occasionally be charged.

The hazards that must be leapt over in *Molly* are rolling pigs and the game itself is a collect-'em-up designed by developer Jamie Fuller's six-year-old daughter, while deadly spikes are combined with a little satire in *Trump Tower* where an orange man with odd-looking hair – we've no idea who this might be referring to – must run around the corridors of a hotel, jumping between hazards and desperately collecting money. *Elevator Eric* also takes place in a series of corridors, this time seeing the titular character trying to avoid being crushed by the lifts on each screen while making his way upwards.

Fans of games like *Downfall* where a sprite must be guided safely between vertically scrolling platforms without falling off the screen to their doom might want to try *Endless World* where a bloblike creature awaits their instructions and *Wave Hero* plonks the player on a jet-ski which must be made to dive underwater before launching skywards over the scrolling backgrounds. Finally, another quirky but clever idea is *Space Poker* where a rocket flies through the stars, collecting huge playing cards and trying to score points with good poker hands before it's fuel runs out. Kikstart.me.uk/craptastic-2018-c64 heads over to the competition website where all of the competition's releases can be found.

Also there was the *Shoot-'em-up Construction Kit* competition where all entries had to be created with the venerable utility. Users of *SEUCK* have been pushing the boundaries of what can be created with it for decades so, while the emphasis is unsurprisingly on blasting things, there's still some variety with traditional fare such as *Ceti 2* or competition winner *Valkyrie 3 – The Night Witch* sitting alongside the platform action of *Dreamworld*. The entries can be downloaded in one handy package at Kikstart.me.uk/seuck-2018-c64.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**



» [MSX] The effects of Virus LGP 79 are widespread and very dangerous.

SAVING SURVIVORS

A rapidly-spreading and deadly virus has been released which has taken hold and decimated the population of the planet. The player finds themselves armed to the teeth and taking on the infected masses to both stay alive and rescue fellow survivors and a quota of the latter must be met in order to unlock the exit on each *Gauntet*-style scrolling level.

Virus LQP-79 is an entry into the MSXdev game jam competition for 2018 and, for those brave enough to head out into a plague-ridden world, more information is available over at Kikstart.me.uk/virus-lqp-msx.

DASHING AROUND

Dullahan Software's *Nebs 'N Debs* is a fast-paced platformer for the NES which started life as a NESdev entry back in 2016 but has since been significantly expanded upon. Debs must run, jump and dash her way through the enemies and destructible landscape details of 12 stages, searching for parts to her spaceship in order to escape from planet Vespasian 7MV.

Further information and the Kickstarter campaign for a physical release of the game can be found at Kikstart.me.uk/nebs-debs-nes, and there's a playable demo available from the developer's own website behind Kikstart.me.uk/nebs-debs-demo-nes.

» [NES] Leaping into the air in preparation for a dashing attack.





» [BBC Master] It's a good job there was a sword just lying around the palace dungeon.

·HOMEBREW HEROES·

Taking Jordan Mechner's source code, Kieran Connell ported the Apple II action platformer Prince Of Persia over to the BBC Master. We wanted to find out more about the process, so we grabbed him for a chat



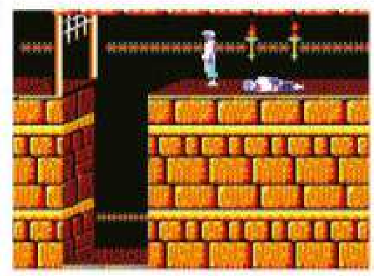
THE BIG INTERVIEW

What inspired you to port *Prince Of Persia* to the BBC Master?

I remember playing the game on a VGA PC back in the late Eighties and being in awe of the amazing animation. In recent years I saw conversions appear for other 8-bit micros and, after I discovered Jordan Mechner had published the original Apple II source on GitHub, I figured it must be possible to port to my favourite BBC Master computer.

What was involved in the conversion and how long did it take?

It was almost a year in total from the first inkling of an idea to uploading a disc image to our website. I had the 6502 assembly code as a starting point but there are over 40,000 lines of it! Pretty sizeable for a game of that era. The first and longest challenge was figuring out how to make the drawing system work with the BBC screen layout. The Apple II hires mode has a weird setup at 280 pixels wide but seven pixels per byte and what's known as 'artefact colour', so the colours on the screen are technically a side-effect of the black and white pixel patterns being interpreted as an NTSC colour signal!



» [BBC Master] One of the guards is just lying down on the job!

Were there any high or low points during the development process?

The persistent pain throughout development was fitting everything into RAM. The BBC Master has 128KB of memory, ostensibly the same as an Apple IIe, but rather than being arranged in two large, convenient 64KB banks it is divided into many smaller chunks located across the system. Add to this the fact that the BBC screen takes twice as much space and it was a constant juggling act to get all of the necessary code and copious sprite data resident at the same time. In the end I created a pseudo-DLL system that allowed me to invisibly call code functions across memory banks. The high point had to be when I put in the first drop of new sprites from the wonderful artist John Blythe, at that point I realised it could be something really special – possibly the best looking BBC game ever!

What sort of response has the *Prince Of Persia* port had from BBC gamers?

The response from the retro community has been amazing and I received tremendous encouragement from the BBC community on the Stardot forum from day one. I have even been accused of causing a spike in prices for BBC Masters on eBay!

Finally, do you have any other projects on the go that our readers would be interested in?

I'm currently working on a port of Jonathan Cauldwell's *Arcade Game Designer*, which will hopefully bring over 60 games from the ZX Spectrum to the BBC and enable brand-new ones to be created without machine code. I also recently saw that the Atari 800XL received a 6502 port of my favourite Amiga game *Stunt Car Racer* – now that would be an awesome project to see on my beloved Beeb.

Gaming

REVIEWS

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Developed by Aleksi Eeben and released in 2002, *Dragonwing* is a space-bound dodge-'em-up for the unexpanded VIC-20. The player is tasked with guiding their spaceship through the rapidly scrolling caverns, constantly thrusting against gravity to avoid colliding with the landscape. There's three lives in stock, with one being quite spectacularly lost every time the craft smacks into the landscape, either due to pilot error or when the fuel runs out. Avoiding the latter requires some risk taking to collect fuel cells from the cavern floor.

What's impressive about *Dragonwing* is that there's quite a bit of detail and a soundtrack in a game running on an unexpanded VIC-20, although the incredible pace does mean that there's little time to stop and appreciate those surroundings. Kikstart.me.uk/dragonwing-vic will take you there.



» [VIC-20] It's worth collecting the fuel pods even if the tank is nearly full.



» [VIC-20] A change of palette makes the environment seem much colder.

CHERIL THE WRITER

» **PLATFORM:** NES » **DEVELOPER:** THE MOJON TWINS » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.ME.UK/CHERIL-WRITER-NES » **PRICE:** FREE

» [NES] Discovering an unexpected but friendly-looking poop emoji deep within the caves.



» [NES] Pausing for a quick chat with one of the non-player characters.

We first met the Mojon Twins' regular protagonist Cheril in *Cheril Of The Bosque* way back in 2010, which chronicled the start of her journey in search of a better life from her home in the dense Badajoz jungle to the city. Since then she's had several videogame-based adventures which have made her something of an expert, so at the start of this latest instalment of her story we find our heroine planning some time away in the secluded resort of Pepinoni with nothing but a laptop and the intention to get some writing done on her book about retro games.

But Pepinoni is almost completely deserted and the first person Cheril finds to chat with reckons it's down to either the recent torrential rain or perhaps the zombies which have recently rocked up. She's never tried her hand at meteorology but Cheril does have quite a bit of previous experience dealing with the undead, specifically by activating the rather mysterious zombie-stunning, green machines which are handily lying around nearby and then stomping the blighted creatures themselves while they're stunned. That's easier said than done, though, because every enemy must be dealt with to complete a stage and, although some of the nasties are conveniently near a machine, others are quite a distance away and reaching them before the device's timer expires and they wake up takes quite a bit of skill.

Cheril The Writer is the kind of challenging platform-based action we've come to expect from the Mojons. Each stage is formed from a collection of flip-screen rooms which have been populated with patrolling nasties to destroy, along with the occasional device that's required in order to complete that task. While the levels aren't extreme in size, they are laden with hazards and the layout is convoluted, with quite a bit of backtracking required. Cheril's slightly slippery controls do make some of the jumps somewhat frustrating, but perseverance is rewarded.

» Score **84%**

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

 RetroGamerUK  @RetroGamer_Mag  darran.jones@futurenet.com

· ROUNDUP ·

The Gaia stone is the heart of the forest, but it has become corrupted, so Nixy the Glade Sprite must head out on a quest to restore the natural balance. There's more information at developer Andy Johns' website at Kikstart.me.uk/nixy-spec and copies should soon be available via Monument Microgames.

Although the devs don't consider it to be finished, a version of *The Walking Death* has been released. It's a shooter for the C64 where up to eight people can wade into battle against each other in a range of environments using the Inception eight-player adapter. Grab it from Kikstart.me.uk/walking-death-c64.

Also on the C64 is *Phantom Of The Blasteroids*, another multiplayer blaster this time for two people whose UFOs have constantly rotating guns so button presses must be timed accordingly. Head to Kikstart.me.uk/phantom-of-c64.

BABY BERKS

» **PLATFORM:** ATARI 8-BIT
» **DEVELOPER:** JON WILLIAMS » **PRICE:** FREE
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.ME.UK/BABY-BERKS-A8



» [Atari 8-bit] There's a lot of work to do after the babies hatch.

Originally released for the Commodore 16 as a type-in listing, Baby Berks is an arena shooter where each stage is populated by two enemies. The Big Berks – they're green, home in on the player and are merely stunned when shot – are there to defend the blue, titular infants which can and indeed must be destroyed to progress before the time limit expires, although there's the small matter of surviving long enough to see them all hatch.

The joystick on its own moves the tank around the playfield while holding the button down and pushing a direction will send a bolt of energy off at the selected angle. Only the walls are harmless to the touch, so it's best to avoid Berks in every phase of their life cycle. Keeping the tank moving and, preferably, away from any tight spaces where the enemies can cluster around it helps as well.

 Score **87%**



» [Atari 8-bit] Use the landscape features to avoid having to deal with the Big Berks.

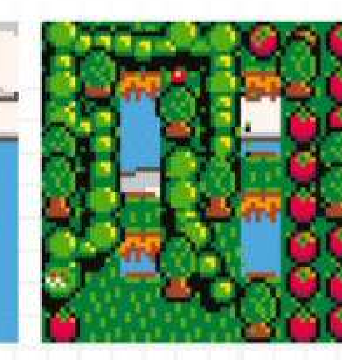
TOMATO WORM

» **PLATFORM:** PICO-8 » **DEVELOPER:** GUERRAGAMES
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.ME.UK/TOMATO-WORM-PICO8 » **PRICE:** FREE

It probably won't come as much of a surprise that a Tomato Worm would absolutely adore tomatoes, but all of the best local sources of his favoured fruit are strangely mazelike allotments, where a hungry but unwary creature could very easily become trapped in a corner by his own body. What makes things trickier is that every on-screen tomato has to be consumed to continue and they add new segments to the worm's body while being digested, making the level more claustrophobic in the process.

Each stage of the game requires some careful advance planning to complete because simply diving in and grabbing the tempting tomatoes next to the worm's starting position will invariably end badly. The current stage can be restarted at any time without penalty so different routes can be experimented with, and consuming the final tomato in the current area is always immensely satisfying.

>>  Score **84%**



» [PICO-8] Chomping merrily through some juicy, but surprisingly fattening, tomatoes.

SCRAMBLE

» **PLATFORM:** ATARI 5200 » **DEVELOPER:** PLAYSOFT » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.ME.UK/SCRAMBLE-5200 » **PRICE:** FREE

Infiltrate the Scramble system, taking on the defences in order to blast through to the base and destroy it. The player's craft can fire forwards to take out some of the airborne threats and drop bombs to destroy enemies on the ground and mission-sustaining fuel dumps.

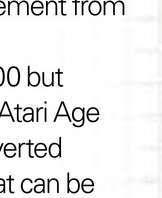
Scramble on the Atari 5200 is an excellent conversion of Konami's seminal blaster which is tough to play but fair and has some great attention to detail both in-game and during the options screen. Along with being able to set the game to 'easy' mode, players get to vary the width of tunnels to compensate for the less precise movement from non-centring 5200 controllers.

And for Atarians who don't own a 5200 but would like to play it on real hardware, an Atari Age forumite called Nobody has already converted *Scramble* to run on 8-bit computers – that can be found at Kikstart.me.uk/scramble-a8.

 Score **90%**



» [ZX Spectrum] Now would probably be a really good time to run away.



MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of either our NES/Master System or SNES/Mega Drive books

TEAM PLAYS

1943



Inspired by Graeme's 1943 Ultimate Guide on page 46, the team took to the skies to see who is the best pilot of RG HQ

DREW 304,900
Frankly, I don't know how this happened. My eyes glazed over and I just started humming a song that was stuck in my head. When I came to, the score was there smiling at me.

NICK 184,880
This contest went down to deadline day. I took first place with what I thought was a good run, only to be immediately crushed by Drew. Rendered a husk of a man, I accepted defeat by challenging no further.

DARRAN 180,110
This was one of the closest matches we've ever had (if you ignore Drew's insane score). I was hoping to do a lot better than I did, but it's far harder than I remember.

SAM 170,070
We were all relatively even until Drew had a blinder with that top score. I reckon he hustled us – toyed with us just to dash our hopes at the 11th hour.



» [SNES] We can't blame Colin for playing through *Super Mario World* with his kids. It's a great game.

RECONNECTING WITH RETRO

My aunt Helen had an Atari 2600 and about 40 years ago I remember playing *Pac-man* for the first time, and that's when I became a gamer.

Up till recently, I purely played videogames on my Xbox One, which is my main portal for escaping reality but then I rediscovered my love for consoles like the SNES and the Mega Drive. I have found myself moving towards retro gaming as a way of having a shared gaming experience with my children, I feel it's better for them to play games like *Super Mario World* rather than hearing abuse online from people playing titles like *Fortnite*.

I read your SNES/Mega drive book and it has helped me rekindle gaming love from my past and it's inspired me to create a gaming blog.

Thank you,
Colin Templeton

We're glad the magazine is helping you reignite your love of old games. One of the recent satisfactions we had from visiting both Arcade Club and Play Expo London was seeing young children enjoying classic games with their parents. It's really heartwarming to see and we'd love to read your blog (we'll need a link).

HARDWARE EVOLUTION

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

I've been a PC gamer since the days of the 286 and had never really looked back until I picked up a copy of your mag about a year ago. I was bitten by the retro bug and built up a nice little retro collection of systems as a result. I've never played consoles or arcade games, so I had a lot of fun playing the likes of *R-Type* and *Soulcalibur* for the first time.

Recently I got hold of an old 486 and it reminded me where my heart really lies. After weeks struggling to get PnP sound to work, I eventually loaded *Dune 2* from floppy for the first time in 20 years, and it was pure magic. It's possibly the only platform to have continually evolved, rather than reinvent itself and now consoles are converging in on the x86 architecture that started way back when.

With that in mind, I thought it would be interesting to see something on the evolution of hardware through the generations as a kind of family tree or overview. It could examine what shared what parts, what effect that had on the games made for them and much more. It would be interesting to see the trends over time to discover if there has been a gradual converging of technology and how it has or hasn't kept games unique on each machine.

Cheers,
Chris Gilholm

That's a really interesting idea for a feature Chris and it's certainly something we'll look into. Many

STAR LETTER

WHY DO WE COLLECT GAMES?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
The other day I was looking through one of the retro groups I am a member of and saw someone was proudly showing off their recently completed Japanese Mega Drive collection. It looked absolutely incredible, mainly because of all the stunning artwork that was on display, but the more I looked, the more I felt it was all a little pointless.

The person in question admitted that they couldn't read a word of Japanese, which instantly meant there were lots of games they couldn't play. And then of course there were all the rubbish games and countless sports releases that make up the backbone of any complete games collection. I personally find it absolutely mind-blowing that someone would not only spend serious money (I'm talking over £100 in some cases) on rubbish games, it just makes no sense to me.

I find all aspects of collecting fascinating because it shows how insane/driven some people truly are. I'd love to personally see an article on what makes collectors tick and what drives them to buy rubbish games (particularly when they know it's rubbish) just so they can have that complete collection. Is it psychological? Is it compulsion? Is it competition? It would be great to find out.

PS, I collect Neo-Geo AES games, but don't have a complete collection.
Paul James

We did do a collection feature many moons ago, but it's not quite in line with what you're suggesting. It would be nice to learn why some gamers collect certain types of games and systems so it's something we'll consider for the future. And Collector's Corner is back this issue, so if anyone would like to show off their collection then contact us at the usual address.



» Darran loves the Mega Drive and the vast majority of his collection features Japanese games. Look how gorgeous the art it.

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thanks for the suggestion and we're glad you're enjoying *Dune* again.

ARCADE IMPERFECT

With a rich arcade history why do you think Sega have no problem releasing endless Mega Drive collections, but nothing to celebrate the coin-ops?

Iain Roberts via Twitter

Sega does do the odd arcade conversion for various digital market places, but it is inconsistent. We'd love a compilation of Super Scaler games, but imagine there would be numerous licence issues.



» [Arcade] Licensing is probably one of the main reasons that's stopping Sega from releasing an arcade compilation.

OLD VERSUS NEW

Does owning a retro rerelease of big brand consoles fulfil a long-term alternative in not owning a PS4, Xbox One, or Nintendo Switch due to their expensive price tags?

The fact of the matter is that a Neo-Geo Mini is on the horizon for us in the UK market makes me think why own a console when I could easily have as much fun with old-school gaming since I never owned a Neo-Geo, but would have fun playing arcade games close to my heart on a console that has had attention to detail to it unlike some of the other releases out there.

What do you guys think?

Cisko Kidd

We're excited to get our hands on the Neo-Geo Mini and we agree that it's a great way to get hold of retro classics, particularly when the original titles are now extremely expensive. Having said that, it could be argued that many modern consoles have the best of both worlds as they all have decent retro releases in their catalogues, particularly the Switch, which has more Neo-Geo games than the incoming Mini. It will cost you more money, of course, but the choices are there.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

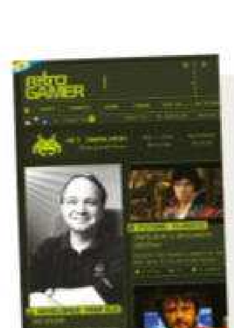
Arcade Club

Both Darran and Nick took the pilgrimage up north to visit Arcade Club this month. Nick was ecstatic to see an original *Time Crisis* cabinet waiting for him – you more often than not see its sequels in arcades rather than the game that started it all. You can read all about Darran's experiences in his *Warlords* Retro Revival on page 18. (Spoiler: He played *Warlords*).





» [Arcade] Regardless of whether you have a new console or a Neo-Geo Mini, games still cheaper than the originals.



Your say

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite Team17 game?

@nakamuramartin
Worms. It really was a brilliant game, particularly in multiplayer. The sound on the PlayStation/CD versions deserves special mention too with some fantastic audio.

@ChrisSmithster
Super Frog, proof that Brits could make a platformer right up there with the best from Japan.

@art_gamer_uk
My favourite Team17 game is *Project-X* on the Amiga. I only ever got to level 2 but with its awesome gameplay and excellent soundtrack I just kept going back. Might just dust of my Amiga 500 cartoon classics and go back for some more punishment.

Chris Legg
I have to say *Alien Breed*, because I have to. But my entire family has THE BEST memories playing *Qwak*. Simple, colourful, and downright devious!

Mark Cooke
Worms Armageddon. I used to love that game. Played it until my fingers bled.

@Toadsanime
Overcooked, easily. Immensely fun and one of those few games literally anyone – even non-gamers – seem to enjoy.



» [Amiga] It's unsurprising that there's still plenty of love for *Worms*.

Simon J Hillan
Used to love *Alien Breed* for the Amiga. Classic game, never completed it though.

Dave Gee
I really liked *Body Blows Galactic*. So much smoother than *SFII* and much better music. The *Alien Breed* games are always worth a shout as well.

Larry Lomas
Worms Armageddon. It's the best game in the entire *Worms* series.

SpecChum81
I only ever really played *Alien Breed* and *Worms*. I loved the gameplay and graphics of *Alien Breed* and I loved the style and humour of *Worms*.

retro GAMER

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Printed by
Wyndham Bicester, Gravnville Way, Bicester, OX26 4QZ

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 1742-3155

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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
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HOW TO

QUICK GUIDES TO HELP YOU GET THE BEST FROM YOUR GAMES

HOW TO...

RUN AN IMPORT CONSOLE

If you want to experience as much of gaming history as possible, you're eventually going to have to look beyond your own shores to machines released elsewhere in the world. Here's what you'll need to take into account

DIFFICULTY

LOW

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

» NTSC COMPATIBLE TV

» IMPORT CONSOLE

» STEP-DOWN CONVERTER *(OPTIONAL)*

» IMPORT GAME ADAPTOR *(OPTIONAL)*

DON'T FORGET...

» Never mix up 110v and 220-240v power supplies – you'll fry your hardware

» Some consoles don't just have problems with foreign games, but foreign peripherals too – examples include NES pads, where US pads won't work on PAL systems

WHERE TO BUY

» **Genki Video Games**
www.genkivideogames.com
This UK-based shop specialises in selling Japanese games and hardware for a number of popular consoles.

» **Console Passion**
www.consolepassion.co.uk
This UK shop sells import games and hardware, and offers modding services for PAL consoles too.

» **Video Game Imports**
www.videogameimports.com
A UK site which carries hardware and software for all major formats.

» **Retro Gaming Cables**
www.retrogamingcables.co.uk
If you need a specific video cable, this shop offers a selection of cables for a wide variety of machines.



» Make sure your step-down converter can handle the power draw your console requires. 500 watts will cover most systems but you can get away with less for older consoles.

» Although your existing video cables will work in many cases if you already have a PAL machine, make sure to check before you use them.

» Sometimes, you might just want to pick up an import console because it looks a bit different to the version released in your region.

01 Work out what machine you're buying and why you're buying an import version. There are many valid reasons – most NTSC machines up to the 32-bit generation offer faster games at full screen, some machines have more available games in other regions, and others have region-specific hardware variants.

02 Arrange an appropriate power supply. Japan and the USA use 110v power and the UK uses 240v, so you'll need a step-down converter if you're using the original power supply in the UK. Alternatively, you may be able to find an appropriate replacement power supply which matches the output of the original.

03 Arrange your video cables. Most modern UK TVs will happily accept NTSC over composite and RGB SCART (as well as S-video, if available), but almost none will accept RF. Some consoles, including the SNES and Saturn, require different cables depending on your region due to hardware differences.



Something you'd like to see a guide for? Contact us at:
RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

MYTHBUSTER Everything you know is a lie

MYTH: My mate Dave told me you can just use UK plugs for import consoles – is he talking rubbish?
FACT: This entirely depends on the system. Some will work just fine, but some have different power requirements. Certain consoles, like the SNES, actually have completely different power connectors in other regions. If in doubt, always use the original power supply and a step-down converter.

MYTH: If my TV can accept NTSC over SCART, surely it can do the same over RF?
FACT: Nope. For a start, NTSC consoles typically output on VHF frequencies. TV in the UK was broadcast over UHF frequencies, so most TVs can't tune VHF. Even if yours can, you'll probably run into other problems. RF-only machines can often be modded for better video output.

> "If you're not going to stick to one region, you may wish to invest in an import game adaptor"



04 Find out how games work. Some machines, including many portables, are region-free – others will be region locked either physically (like with the NTSC Super Famicom/SNES carts above) or technically (like with PlayStation games). If you're not going to stick to one region, you may wish to invest in an import game adaptor.

05 Do a little bit more research on your chosen platform, as each has unique foibles. For example, you can only have saves from a single region on any given GameCube memory card, and original PlayStation consoles output PAL/NTSC video based on the region of the game, rather than the console.

WHAT NEXT?

- It's possible to modify most PAL consoles to accept games of various regions and output a good 60Hz image, though this is almost always a permanent change that involves soldering skills.
- New hardware clones may be able to function as an import machine would – these are typically only available for the 16-bit systems and older, though.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED. . .

A selection of smaller questions from readers

SHOWING OFF

What are some creative ways to display your collections other than the typical gaming shelves setup?
Meow-Té-Ching via Twitter

For loose cartridges, there are a number of nice free-standing display stands available, from tiered N64 game displays to ones intended for Game Boy *Pokémon* games, in matching colours. We've also seen wall-mounting hooks to display your cartridges on the wall, and CD wall tiles serve a similar purpose for games in standard-sized cases. We've also seen collections that are in little display shrines themed around a certain game or series.

CONDITION CRISIS

I'd love to see a guide to defining the condition of games and consoles when it comes to reselling. Like, what contributes to an 'excellent condition' rating?
James Bretherton via Twitter

This one's tricky, as various people have their own standards. If you don't have time to detail each game's flaws and imperfections, the best thing you can do as a seller is to clearly define what those terms mean to you, and then grade each component using them. It's much harder for a buyer to quibble over condition if you have already spelled out what they should expect from an item described as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

FINDING THE TIME

The only How To we all struggle with is how to find the time/money to keep indulging in our passion and you can't answer that one (even if you enlarged the mag to the size of a bookazine).
Haneefa via Twitter

This is a matter of prioritisation. Too much time playing retro games means not enough money to buy them, and too much work means not enough time to play them. The key is to strike the right balance. Nick finds that being single means that he has no other commitments and can dedicate all of his free time and money to retro gaming, but you may feel this is rather too drastic.



» You can have all sorts of collections. Mat Boyle, for example like to focus on picking up titles for Nintendo's Game Boy.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**



SUPER PLAY ISSUE 1
"My personal fave as it is signed by Wil Overton, who worked on it. It's my favourite mag of all time."
PAID: £35
(for an entire set!)



ZERO ISSUE 1
"Such a great magazine! The humour went over my head back then, but I read it now and it's so funny. It had some great writers, and the final few issues are very hard to find."
PAID: £10
(as part of a bulk lot)





CVG ISSUE 277
"There are loads of great issues of *C&VG*, but this was the last ever monthly mag. I remember working at Gamestation at the time, wondering when issue 278 was coming out. Sadly, it never did."
PAID: £4

BIO

NAME:
Paul Monaghan

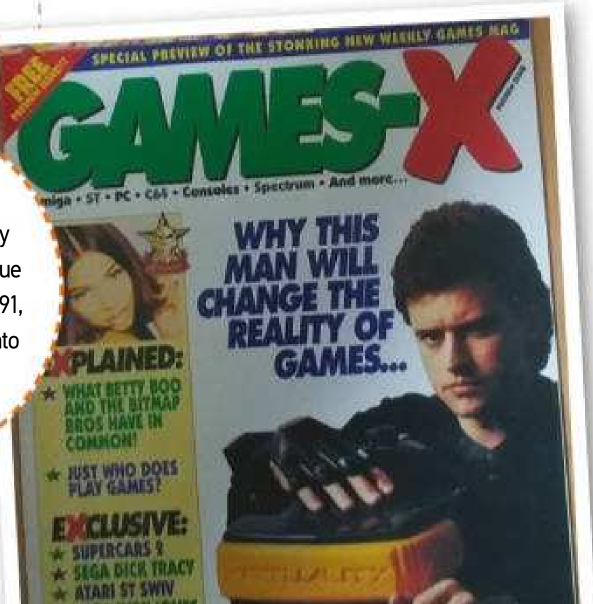
ESTIMATED SIZE:
About 600 magazines

BEGAN COLLECTING:
2012

FAVOURITE MAGAZINE:
Super Play

FAVOURITE GAME:
Streets Of Rage 2

TWITTER:
PdmonPaul



GAMES-X PREVIEW ISSUE
"It was a great mag, yet sadly only lasted 48 issues. This issue came free with *ST Action* in 1991, just as I was starting to get into games mags."
PAID: £1

MAG MANIA

Paul Monaghan turns the page on his magazine hoard

Ask any videogame fan about growing up with their hobby and you can bet the answer will at some point feature a magazine of some sort. Long before the internet, gaming mags were the only way to keep up to date with the latest news and reviews of your favourite system. From the days of *Crash*, *Zzap!* and *Your Sinclair*, to the Nineties and *Mean Machines* and *Super Play*, in many ways the magazines hold more nostalgia than the games themselves. "Magazines are a great part of any retro gaming collection," says Paul Monaghan, cohost of the *Maximum Powerup* podcast. "And the visuals inside bring so many memories flooding back; this was our internet back then for games news and views. I have so many happy memories reading mags as a kid, and want to keep a great record and crosssection of titles, space permitting. My wife refers to my collection as a fire hazard!"

Paul began collecting mags six years ago, he read them voraciously while growing up. "*ST Action*, *Games X*, *C&VG*, *GamesMaster* – the list goes on, as I bought nearly any mag I could with my paper round money!" With his nostalgia itch covered collecting these again, fresh mags are regularly added to his collection.

Condition is a crucial factor in collecting mags. Paul has found that magazines purchased from other collectors are generally the best in this respect. "But they often get ripped easily, are often written in, or have competitions cut out. Fortunately it doesn't bother me too much unless it's a magazine I want a full collection of."

Complete collections are the holy grail for this collector, and his proudest set is for his favourite magazine. "I bought the full run of *Super Play* from eBay in 2004 for about £35," he explains. "I had to collect them from a guy in Burnley, met him at the train station, and returned with a rucksack full of hundreds of pages of gaming memories." Paul also has a full set of *Nintendo Magazine System*, and requires just issue 50 of *Mean Machines Sega*, as he focuses on new collections all the time.

"There were so many great magazines to choose from back in the Eighties and Nineties," he says. "They all had great writers, and their views were like gospel to many people. Years later, titles like *Zzap!*, *Super Play* and *Mean Machines* still make so many gamers smile and think back to those days of getting the latest issue." ★

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com



ST ACTION
ISSUE 30

"The first games mag I bought with my pocket money as a kid. It came with a demo of *The Spy Who Loved Me*, which I spent ages playing."

PAID: £2

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

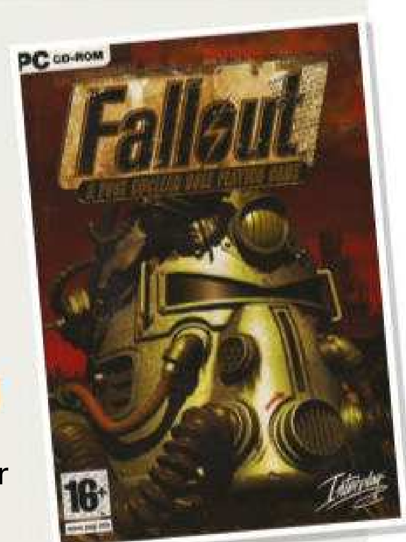
MEAN MACHINES PLAYSTATION ISSUE 0/1

■ "Not many people are aware of this one – there were only seven issues, and I currently own three of them. It was the last mag to carry the *Mean Machines* name, and they still have the free X-Men comic and players guide attached to them."

PAID: £8

BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices



THE COVER GAME FALLOUT

If this month's *Fallout* feature has made you eager to own the entire series of games, you're going to need deep pockets. Big box versions of *Fallout* and its sequel have been selling for **between £100 and £150**, with *Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood Of Steel* fetching similar prices. *Fallout 3* and *Fallout 4* are far cheaper, unless of course you want to hunt down their limited edition bundles…

KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE

Thankfully, this fun puzzle game is still relatively easy to source with virtually all the versions available **between £5 and £20**. The NES, SNES and Game Boy releases command the highest prices, although we couldn't find any examples of the Amiga version, so that could well be one to snap up if you see it in the wild.

1943: THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY



Home conversions of Capcom's arcade game are dirt cheap at the moment, with many versions going for **under £5**. You can expect to pay up to a tenner for the Commodore 64 version and the budget Kixx variant is sometimes cheaper. If you want the arcade original then a PCB will cost you **over £60**.



SIN AND PUNISHMENT: SUCCESSOR TO THE EARTH

Unlike some of Treasure's other titles, *Sin And Punishment* is still available for a decent price and you should be able to pick up a copy for **around £40**. Buy it now, thank us later.

HARDWARE HUNT GAME GEAR TV TUNER

We can't think of a good reason why you would even consider wanting on of these, outside of either wanting a complete Game Gear collection or being a mad technomancer like our very own Nick Thorpe. Still, these devices sell frequently on eBay for **around the £10 region** unboxed .

HOW MUCH?! THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST



PAL Super Nintendo prices are often shockworthy, but a recent copy of *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* truly staggered us. The mint, sealed copy of the popular game, complete with its red stripe sent 13 bidders into a frenzy, with the final price ending on **£1,332.66**.

Prices correct at time of print



ALSO INSIDE...

40 Years Of SNK, Spectrum +3, The Getaway, Darren Melbourne, Gynoug, Gauntlet: The Third Encounter, The Eidolon, The Bluffer's Guide To Westerns

ENDGAME



ROCKIN' KATS

» Some day, a real rain will come and wash all the scum off the streets of New York – but until then, it's raining cats and dogs, and they're battling for control of the city. Can Willy, the titular Rockin' Kat, drive Mugsy and his gang out of town? Of course he can, because you're playing the game, and you're great. So let's skip the grunt work and find out what happens when he does.



01

» Mugsy hasn't just been kicked out of town, he's been kicked right off the face of the planet! With boots like that, Willy should be playing football, not fighting gangsters. In any case, our crime lord is on an extraterrestrial journey.



02

» This journey comes to an halt as he crashes into the moon, which doesn't look pleased to have been assaulted. However, the moon has described itself as "pretty placid" in interviews with *All About Space*, and soon returns to that demeanour.



03

» So let's check in on our hero, and his girlfriend Jill. She's undoubtedly happy to have been rescued from the dastardly kidnappers, and decides upon a long, romantic gaze into the eyes of the Rockin' Kat himself, in full view of Lady Liberty.



04

» Time passes, and still the staring continues. Willy is becoming worried as the sun begins to set. It's been four hours and she hasn't even blinked. Is this some kind of delayed post-traumatic reaction to having been kidnapped? Is Jill irrevocably broken? How's he going to get her home like this?



05

» Finally, as night falls over the city that never sleeps, he asks if she's okay. "Oh yeah," she replies. "I was just thinking about how much I love sleeping in boxes." Ah, there's the old Jill that Willy knows so well – a total space case. They share a kiss as the closing credits roll.



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